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The Divided Seal: Reading a History of Signatures in Visual Art through Derrida's Signature Event Context

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Wolverhampton for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Signature ……..

Date ……

ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the function of signatures in visual art using the theory of Jacques Derrida and a series of paradigmatic historical examples. Specifically, it departs from 'Signature Event Context' (SEC) to establish signature outside the idiom of visual art as a social process. Having established signature as process designed to guarantee presence, it suggests that signature should be considered a method of production. As a method of production, signature has a significant contemporary relevance for dematerialised and Relational Art practices which are frequently held to be 'unsigned'. This thesis suggests grounds for questioning the unsigned quality of Relational Art, and looks at what signatory production means for it. Until the 1990s, signature was mostly ignored as a subject for serious art historical scholarship. It is still rarely indexed as a subject even when it warrants a mention in the body of a text. Although a clutch of recent studies have addressed its occurrence in the work of individual artists, or within the boundaries of narrowly defined eras, there is little work - if any - which attempts to connect these pockets of knowledge with a conceptual grounding of what signature does in order to develop a connected narrative and broad understanding for its place. As a result, there is little interrogation of signature's mechanism alongside historical examples, and scholarship is instead focused on its appearance. This thesis attempts a broad, conceptually informed, historical survey, using examples that date as far back as the sixth century BC. The aim is to unpack the signature-form 'R. Mutt' which appears on Marcel Duchamp's Readymade, *Fountain* (1917), a work with great conceptual importance for contemporary dematerialised and Relational Art practices. In bringing SEC into close

proximity to *Fountain*, the thesis establishes potential grounds for reading a significant theoretical relationship between Derrida and Duchamp, a pairing which has been neglected by scholars despite conceptual sympathies between them.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to provide a critical analysis of the historically variable role of signature in visual art. In this, it is delimited by Marcel Duchamp's Readymade *Fountain* (1917) (Fig. 1), and by Jacques Derrida's essay 'Signature Event Context' (SEC) (1977), which have sympathetic points of contact and are necessary constraints on the project.[1] My initial interest in pursuing research in this area was prompted by an academic engagement at undergraduate level with the mechanistics of art prizes, which focused on the Turner Prize of 1993 and the associated intervention by the K Foundation; at graduate level with the materiality and geographical contingency of Sherrie Levine's 'rephotographs', which substantiated a claim for works of appropriation to be read as 'still life'; and led from those foundations to an engagement with the legacies of the discourse of 'dematerialisation' which have filtered through to 'Relational Art'. In my studio practice as an artist, I have been very much concerned with the relationship between anonymity and seriality. The proposal for this thesis developed in the combination between studio practice and academic research, and my motivatation to produce it was initially informed by experience gained in practical engagements with contemporary art and its markets.

In this thesis, I am concerned with investigating signature as a process rather than as a sign. However, I am not principally engaged with its dissolute, 'invisible' manifestation as 'style' or 'touch', a manifestation which would appear to serve its most ambiguous definitions well. As a process, signature most obviously results in names on artworks and

[1] Derrida, J. 'Signature Event Context', *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988)

as the clearest expression of signature, they permit complex analysis of the process. I am investigating written signatures through various exemplars in order to try and recover aspects of the signatory process that are otherwise obscured. My thesis treats the signature 'R. Mutt' on *Fountain* (a signed urinal) as an historical form which references the autographic signatory habits of 19th century painters, Courbet in particular. In doing so, I aim to provide a platform from which the invisible activity of signature in dematerialised art practice can be addressed: *Fountain* is an important foundation in that narrative, so understanding its signature – a pictorial form - is a crucial step. I want to suggest that examination of signature's historical written forms in art can substantiate a claim for it to be related to modes of artistic production in a contemporary context. So, despite the fact that my thesis is not directly concerned with 'diffuse' notions of signature and does not analyse dematerialised works *per se*, the desire to produce it has nonetheless been motivated by contemplation of the operations of Relational Art in which notions of both signature and style might be seen to be extraneous and irrelevant. Relational Art - the orchestration of circumstances and situations for aesthetic ends - does not necessarily involve the artist in producing any manual effects or objects, and it may seem counterintuitive to suggest that a historical understanding of written signatures can have anything to do with it. Scrolling back through the signature on *Fountain*, I suggest that the history Relational Art assumes for itself is too short. If *Fountain* can be shown to demonstrate that the operation of signature liberates the hand from the object and from manual production, this is operation is permitted by the sum of what artists's signatures have been used to do previous to it and it is as important an agent of operation as *Fountain's* 'anti-art' form. Simply stated, I build a position using signature's material

history from which the behaviour of signatory processes in dematerialisation might be looked at.

The aim of the thesis, then, is to consider 'pre-Conceptual' signatures. My contention is that the 19th century signing conventions that enabled *Fountain* are indicative of legacies and behaviours relating both to the artist and the object which have been mediated over centuries by the changing form and operation of signature. Such legacies and behaviours have a very long, textured history and my contention is that deeply sedimented, widely dispersed signatory conventions were fundamental in allowing a urinal to perform as art. Key examples are used to demonstrate the historical contigency of signatory forms in order to question the motivation for their existence and the effects of their establishment.

The thesis relies upon a detailed reading of Derrida's signatory theory to provide a conceptual basis for understanding the general function that signature performs. Reading Derrida, the sequence of encounter is almost as important as the substance. The reading I have derived from SEC – as a starting point - has influenced engagement with all the other Derridean texts that I trace the concept of signature through. Derrida's concern with signature was life-long, complex and defining. His work points to the liberatory potential in signature as well as its role in determining property. He understands signature to be an operation rather than an appearance and his work allows me to suggest that signature can be understood to be an important process of production in art.

1.1 FRAMING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.1.1 BOURRIAUD AND RELATIONAL ART

The term 'Relational Art' was coined at the end of the 1990s by the French curator and writer, Nicholas Bourriaud, to describe artistic practices that take the sphere of human interaction as material to be worked:

> When Gabriel Orozco puts an orange on the stalls of a deserted Brazilian market (*Crazy Tourist,* 1991), or slings a hammock in the MoMA garden in New York (*Hamoc en la moma*, 1993), he is operating at the hub of "social infra-thinness" (*l'inframince social*), that minute space of daily gestures determined by the superstructure made up of "big" exchanges, and defined by it. Without any wording, Orozco's photographs are a documentary record of tiny revolutions in the common urban and semi-urban life (a sleeping bag on the grass, an empty shoe box, etc.). They record this silent, still life nowadays formed by relationships with the other.[2]

Several points of interest in this passage are relevant to formulating research questions which investigate the problem of signature. Firstly, it is specifically 'Gabriel Orozco' who actions the placement of the orange – to what extent does the specificity of the individual matter? Does the artwork change if the individual is not Gabriel Orozco but Jenny Saville (a painter) or Marina Abramovic (a performance artist)? Peter Doig or Chris Ofili? A. N. Other or me? Does the action require an artist known as such – what if celebrity artist, James Franco, actioned the placement of the orange? Secondly, in

[2] Bourriaud, N. *Relational Art* (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2002) p17

marking a 'Brazilian' market and 'the MoMA' garden, Bourriaud marks the provenance of place – the importance of *terroir*: does the artwork change if the market is in Bolton, not Brazil; the garden that of a post office in Cromarty, not a museum in New York? (Increasingly, we can see Bourriaud's use of 'or' is slightly disingenuous). Thirdly, Bourriaud describes the action as operating at 'the hub of social infra-thinness' and in doing so, deliberately opens his text out onto the legacies of Duchamp: the neologism *inframince* (translated as 'infra-thin') is a private term coined by Duchamp in order to structure aspects of his thought.[3] Duchamp did not conclusively define *inframince*, but the working concept involves those notions of 'difference' and 'betweenness' that can transform an everyday object into a work of art. How do these inheritances enable Relational Art and why does Bourriaud deliberately call on them? What can be learned about the way Relational Art operates (as a dematerialised practice) from looking closely at the conditions that allowed the Readymade to take shape in the early 20th century, and then to deploy 'fully' some 50 years later in the context of Conceptual Art? How does Duchamp's *inframince* relate to Derrida's *différance* (a concept which invokes difference and delay simultaneously)? Bourriaud draws attention to the 'documentary record', constructed 'without any wording' – is it possible to document artistic projects, seeming to rely so heavily on provenance 'without wording', and why should that even be an aspiration? Issues of provenance and documentation are very much implicated in the functioning of the traditional art market which deals with paintings, sculptures, prints and the like. They are relied upon not just by dealers, gallerists and collectors, but by art historians, validating foundations and institutions. Ideally, Relational practice does not

[3] Sanouillet. M. and Peterson, E. (eds.) *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

produce permanent, physical objects – how does this change the operation of provenance? Can an examination of how signatures have behaved when they are visible and 'unambiguous' on an artwork help reformulate understanding of the location of 'commodity' in/as provenance? And what might this mean for the claims of difference made for Relational Art *vis-à-vis* traditional sculptures, paintings, drawings, photographs etc.?

The questions I've formulated above give on to broader questions concerning the *general* nature of work and position in late capitalism. About the same time as Bourriaud collected certain art practices together under the rubric of Relational Art, Daniel Pink's short but frequently cited article, 'The MFA is the new MBA', marked an increasingly important general segue between creativity and entrepreneurship.[4] Pink suggests that as a consequence of the globalized out-sourcing of service industries in the 21st century, corporate recruiters began to scout industry talent from leading art schools rather than business schools because art graduates represented a quality – 'creativity' – that cannot be outsourced. Differentiating product in an over-stocked marketplace requires lateral 'right-brain' thinking and the production of 'transcendent' offerings that are 'physically beautiful and emotionally compelling'. Simply stated, art adds value. Conversely, art itself might be said to operate in an over-stocked marketplace that requires 'left-brain' thinking and the reduction of 'creative' open ends to USPs and reliable products, a situation that Pink deftly ignores, but one that has implications for the role of signature in

[4] Pink, D. H. 'The MFA is the new MBA', *Harvard Business Review* (February 2004) pp21-22; see also Florida, R. *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002); Hoffman, R. & Casnocha, B. *The Start-Up of You* (New York: Crown Business, 2012)

art. Can a theory and history of signatures in art inflect an understanding of how artists – as opposed to artworks - are and have been produced?

1.1.2 BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO: THE PROJECTIVE CITY

More significant than Pink's aphoristic comment on the desirability of MFA graduates is Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, which was published in France in 1999 (almost exactly contemporaneous with the publication in France of Bourriaud's *Relational Art* in 1998).[5] In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski & Chiapello analyze changes in the language of (French) management literature between the 1960s and 1990s, tracing and demonstrating the adaptive capacity of capitalism in terms of creativity. They note that, having assimilated artistic critique - the 'repertoire of 1968' - business literature produced in the 1990s routinely reflected the values of 'autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphous capacity, multi-tasking, conviviality and openness'.[6] They contend that first order global capitalism in the 21st century – 'Third Spirit Capitalism' – is characterized by what they call the 'Projective City', a system of organization that detaches capital entirely from material forms of wealth, dissipating it through high status social networks. Capital is reconstituted through encounters, events and projects – 'pockets of accumulation' - that exist for as long as they are needed. Material forms of wealth constitute obstacles to capital's generative power which has a

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5 Boltanski, L. & Chiapello, E. *The New Spirit of Capitalism,* (London: Verso, 2005)

6 Ibid p5

'genuinely abstract character that makes accumulation an interminable process' ('growth' is achieved through esoteric transformation rather than physical expansion).[7] Organisation in the Projective City seeks to erode boundaries and erase the difference between work and non-work, with the result that neither labour nor products can be distinctly separated from people. Existence – which shares attributes with 'visibility' – is a 'relational attribute'.[8] Those who fail in the Projective City - who fail to connect, collaborate and establish useful networks - cannot reconstitute capital (they may not even be able to exchange their labour): they are *invisible*, denied existence. In the Projective City, a connected individual finds it easier to make future connections and reconstitute capital in their favour and this radiates outwards - for example, a connected institution can trade on the successes and positions of its alumni. As a conduit for visibility, signature irrigates general social position in the Projective City and its operation can be traced usefully in the history of art.

Representing itself as a lived world of participation, accessibility and inclusion, an experience of the everyday in which private blurs into public, the Projective City shares ideological features with Bourriaud's notion of Relational Art: 'its theoretical horizon [is] the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space.'[9] In Bourriaud's view, Relational Art works to establish the artwork as 'social interstice', a space excepted from the temporal diktats, over-arching law of profit and general conditions governing human relations in

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7 Ibid *xx*

8 Ibid p126

9 Bourriaud, *Relational Art*, op.cit. p14

capitalism. So, to add to the set of questions posed above, we might ask if the abandonment of the 'object' in Relational Art is an attempt to flee the processes of commodification and if it is, does Relational Art succeed in that aim (given that Conceptual Art - also described by a desire to avoid reification - failed in this respect)? Unquestionably influential, Bourriaud, and the coterie of artists whose work he uses to progress his theory, have been accused of reproducing those commercial forms and imperatives of neo-liberalism that are predicated on creating and selling 'experience'. The accusation is that far from proposing a space apart from capitalism as it is organized in the experience economy, Relational Art augments it.[10]

Bourriaud observes the reification of social relations in everyday life as 'standardized artefacts' in order that he can construct an excepted, aesthetic space of art relations as fluid and free. He aspires to move Relational Art beyond those circuits of reification and commodification which appeared to hinder the Conceptual project by crediting it with the ability to produce temporary interstices *in* the everyday, free from the strictures of the 'White Cube', (the contradictions between 'temporary' and 'documentary' are not resolved by Bourriaud, nor does he address the affinity between any ideologically excepted, aesthetic space and the White Cube).[11] Bourriaud contends that as interstice, art partly 'protects' social relations from uniformity and reification: art is not the space in

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[10] The term 'experiential economy' derives from the work of Pine, J. & Gilmore, J. *The Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999)

[11] The term 'White Cube' was initially used to differentiate contemporary art galleries which seemed to accept the discourse of Conceptual Art from those which departed from earlier Academic and museological models: Doherty, B. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space (Expanded Edition)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)

which reification occurs, but the space in which it is dissolved. There is an implication that anything which is not uniform can thereby avoid reification - the relationship between uniformity and reification is anachronistic, rooted in ideas of early capitalist mass-production, and in this respect, Bourriaud's theory is nostalgic. He ignores the important and obvious fact that Relational Art projects are usually organised under the auspices of established art institutions and successful Relational Artists, (those who are historicized and reputationally secured by curators and theorists like Bourriaud), are 'represented' by conventional commercial gallery concerns. To posit art as capable of avoiding reification because it appears to maintain some physical distance from the gallery and does not make recourse to traditional genres, objects or materials is problematic.

In Bourriaud's formulation, Relational Art operates at an aestheticized distance from the 'everyday' which is described as a qualitively different locale – it is the place where 'standardization' and reification happen. Consequently, there are aspects of Bourriaud's formulation which reiterate well-established antinomies between high and low culture; art and kitsch; between uniformity and difference, generality and particularity, transience and permanence; space and non-space. Bourriaud says the Relational Artist 'dwells in the circumstances the present offers him so as to turn the setting of his life (his links with the physical and conceptual world) into a lasting world.'[12] The use of 'lasting' contradicts the impermanence Bourriaud is required by his theory to read into Relational Art. Here,

[12] Bourriaud, *Relational Art*, op. cit. p14

again, his ideas give on to the aporiae that characterize signature and that is the point at which his theory collapses, at least as far as reification goes.

1.1.3 RELATIONAL ART CONTESTED

Stewart Martin challenges Bourriaud's assumption that by prioritizing the social relations between people as mediums of experience, Relational Art avoids reification.[13] For Martin, Bourriaud's notion of Relational Art is caught in the same trap as those who, in the 1960s, believed that the dematerialised artform could resist commodification. Martin illustrates this point with a quote from *Postproduction*, (a follow-up to *Relational Art*), in which Bourriaud develops his theory through a configuration of culture as a bazaar ('the wrong kind of shops') and artists as 'DJs':

> artists might seek to rematerialize (the basic functions of our daily lives), to give shape to what is disappearing before our eyes. Not as objects which would be to fall into the trap of reification, but as mediums of experience.[14]

It seems naïve of Bourriaud to suggest - in the late 1990s - that avoidance of (simple) objects (augmented by an avoidance of the White Cube) is an effective avoidance of the trap of reification. Martin states, 'capitalist exchange value is not constituted at the level of objects, but of social labour, as a measure of abstract labour.'[15] Bourriaud's theorizing

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13 Martin, S. 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics' *Third Text* Vol. 21, Issue 4, (2007) pp369-386

14 Bourriaud, N. *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002) p7

15 Martin, op. cit. p378

of Relational or Postproduction Art avoids admitting the superstructural importance of this and of the fact that human relationships are the foundation for 'social labour'. Martin welcomes Bourriaud's theorizing of Relational practice for the contribution it (ideally) makes to focusing the project of contemporary art on the political project of opposing capitalist ideology, but he judges Bourriaud to have fetishized 'the social' exactly as an impossible realm apart. Bourriaud's failure to acknowledge signatory process leads his idealistic fetishization of 'the Relational' outside the general economy.

As a Bourriaudian interstice, despite being released from the bounding, physical architecture of the White Cube, art is nonetheless bound by a process of reification that can be considered metaphorically as a process of sclerosis, a measurable arterial hardening of human relations - what for Boltanski & Chiapello is a stabilizing 'reduction'.[16] Does the artist's signature trade on any specific inheritances that equip it to operate as a measure of stability - a point of reduction that is simultaneously a point of accumulation and aggregation; a reification of the person (no longer able to separate life from work) and of the social relations producing that person; as the dematerialised *principle* of the White Cube? Is the artist's signature (an old guarantee of presence and authenticity) evident in the structures which enable the Bourraudian Relational Artist? Just when signature seems most materially dissolute; deferred to interpretive 'stuff', (anecdotes, reviews, adverts, CVs, statements of practice); physically invisible in the artwork, is it assumed and omnipresent, configured as a stabilized nodal point, with the qualitative action of material? Far from proposing a space beyond reification, does

[16] Boltanski & Chiapello, op. cit. p145

Bourriaud require the delimiting, quasi-materialistic effects of signature and does Relational practice thus represent the manner of reification in the Projective City? The Dutch economist, Olav Velthius says: 'In the unmasking of the equivalence bewteen art and economy, the signature plays an important role': why is it ignored in Relational Art practice?[17]

Claire Bishop, whose analysis of Relational Art counterposes 'antagonism' to 'conviviality', accuses Bourriaud of reifing himself and of establishing his signature, (and those of several artist-exemplars), through his curatorial activities. [18] She observes that certain artists favoured by Bourriaud in his exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris and elsewhere appear with 'metronymic regularity' in *Relational Art*. The use of the word 'metronymic' is hardly incidental and alludes simultaneously to the importance of signature in Relational Art, and to what might be styled a key operation of signature in the Projective City, that of homeostatic regulation. Despite this reservation, Bishop sets Bourriaud's group of 'mostly European' artists against the 'conservative' generation of Young British Artists (YBAs), vindicating the former through the apparent erosion of individual subjectivity that seems to flow from Relational practice:

> unlike the distinctively branded personalities of young British art, it is often hard to identify who has made a particular piece of 'relational' art, since it tends to make use of existing cultural forms – including other works of art – and remixes them in the manner of a DJ or programmer. Moreover, many of the artists Bourriaud discusses have

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[17] Velthius, O. *Imaginary Economics: Contemporary Artists and the World of Big Money* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2005) p47

[18] Bishop, C. 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' *October* 110 (Fall 2004) pp51-79

> collaborated with one another, further blurring the imprint of individual authorial status. Several have also curated each others' work in exhibitions… [19]

Here, Bishop seems to exhibit a degree of faith in the interruptive potential of 'remixing' and 'collaboration' *per se*. She accepts Bourriaud's definition of the Relational Artist as a 'DJ or programmer' who is someone apparently excepted from producing anything that relies on the spurious discourse of 'originality'. The discourse of originality is yoked to material production and in that movement, because remixed, collaborative practice makes no claims for *ex nihilo* 'newness', the Relational Artist is excepted from material production. This underpins the rationalization of Relational Art as a practice which avoids commodificiation.[20] Bishop associates 'distinctive branding' with the 'imprint of individual authorial status', formulating a generative opposition between YBAs and Relational Artists in terms of how overtly and closely they *appear* to manifest their signatures in discrete objects for exhibition. The passage reads as if she believes Relational Art operates specifically against 'signature', (thereby according signature a defining and productive role in art that is previous, or counter to, Bourriaud's formulation).

Even as Relational Art gains traction by appearing to oppose signature as it is seen to expunge 'branding' and 'individual authorial status', as Bishop notices, its artists are nonetheless established by 'metronymic regularity', by a curator whose signature

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[19] Ibid. p55

[20] The fact that the1990s saw the commercial rise of the 'Superstar DJ' is not addressed by either Bourriaud or Bishop. On this subject see, for example, Brewster, B. and Broughton, F. *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (London: Headline, 1999); Phillips, D. *Superstar Djs Here We Go!: The Incredible Rise of Clubland's Finest: Glory, Excess and Burnt Out Dreams* (London, Random House, 2009)

overrides and elaborates those of the artists he works with. This operation mirrors the establishment of 'brands'. Brands are essentially intangible (reputational) and in this respect dematerialised artworks operate through processes that mirror the legal notion of 'goodwill'. The mechanisms of branding have a long historical and conceptual association with the notion of 'guarantee' - branding attempts to attach value *verifiably* and traceably to source - and as such does not necessarily require or result in anything *inherently* 'distinctive', original or individual. Of course, originality is what the artist's signature presumes to sign, to guarantee, so 'original' artworks embody a degree of paradox. Bishop's desire to oppose Relational Artists to YBAs on the grounds of 'distinctive branding' attaches signature reductively to YBAs as a stable appearance mainfest in the manual production of artworks, and does not recognise it as a process.

Bishop's alignment between 'individual authorship' and 'conservatism' assumes that collaboration necessarily mitigates against the *imprint* of the individual author. In the Projective City, does collaboration - the labour of global connection - inherently blur individual authorial status? How does the word 'individual' qualify 'authorship' in such a way as to posit collaborative authorship as *necessarily* less a point of accumulation than individual authorship? The author-function, as theorized by Michel Foucault in the late 1960s, may well operate as single point of collection, but it is not the function of *an* individual, who, in any case, is not a water-tight, non-permeable being.[21] Like Bourriaud, Bishop reads individually authored works as 'complete' and therefore 'inactive'. Complete artworks, it is adjudged, have easily identifiable ('signed') authors and can

[21] Foucault. M. 'What is an Author?' (1969) in Preziosi, D. (ed.) *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) pp321-334

only offer the spectator the opportunity for contemplation, unlike those experiential, Relational artworks that require the participation of the spectator in a productive process orientated towards creating interstice. One of the problems with faith in participation *per se* is that there is no necessary leveling of roles within Relational artworks: testament to this is Rikrit Tiravanjia's inclusion of 'lots of people' in his inventory of 'materials' (something Bishop draws attention to). 'Participation' does not blur the distinction between artist and spectator any more than collaboration blurs or erases the imprint of individual authorship. Who or what claims credit on participatory projects; who fosters the conditions for participation and directs the action (at the most minimal level) really depends on who overwrites the 'project', who signs it off, to whom it accrues. If anything, participation enforces (certain) distinctions. Nor are there compelling grounds for adjudicating objects 'complete' by virtue of their materiality: the possibilities of encountering artworks is no better served by Relational Art simply because it is styled as 'experiential' and its materiality is apparently transitory. If signature is a process not an appearance, how does this affect the criticial counterposition of 'experience' to 'object'?

So far, the problems and questions I have discussed may be broadly summarized as follows: Why does the specificity of the individual matter in Relational Art? What is the place of provenance in dematerialised artworks? Do dematerialised artworks avoid circuits of commodification by virtue of their dematerialisation? Does collaboration blur the imprint of individual authorial status? These are problems and questions that I think can be reframed through an analysis of how signatures have behaved historically, and

through developing a parallel understanding of what signatures are supposed to do conceptually.

1.1.4 DEPARTING FROM FOUNTAIN

As already mentioned, Bourriaud's use of *inframince* opens his theorizing of Relational Art directly and deliberately onto the legacies of Duchamp, including the legacy of his critical engagement with signature. Duchamp signed work (including Readymades) in his own name, but it is the peculiarity of the pseudo-signature, 'R. Mutt', that brings his understanding of signature into focus: on *Fountain*, the name, R. Mutt, and date, 1917, are staged as the representation of a 'proper signature'. Treatments of *Fountain* tend to depart from its object quality as an industrially produced ceramic, sometimes in terms of its physical beauty, sometimes on the basis of its rejection from the Society of Independent Artists (S.I.A.) exhibition in 1917, a rejection that is recovered latterly as a 'success', (i.e. *Fountain* proves that an artist can get anything 'non-art' accepted as art in an exhibition).[22] Though *Fountain* is often paraphrased as 'a urinal signed by Marcel Duchamp', there is a qualitive difference in the representative nature of its false signature when compared with other Readymades which carry Duchamp's 'own' signature. This difference is not noticed or thought significant by Peter Bürger, who comments:

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[22] e.g. Rowell, M. *Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life*, (New York: MoMA, 1997)

> When Duchamp signs mass-produced objects (a urinal, a bottle-drier) and sends them to art exhibits he negates the category of individual production… The signature, whose very purpose is to mark what is individual in the work, that it owes its existence to this particular artist, is inscribed on an arbitarily chosen mass product, because all claims to individual creativity are to be mocked. Duchamp's provocation not only unmasks the art market where signature can mean more than the quality of the work; it radically questions the very principle of art in bourgeois society according to which the individual is considered the creator of the work of art. [23]

Bürger's understanding of what signature is and does relies on the commonplace, 20th century acceptance of signature as an autograph that completes and ties what it signs to a verifiable, creative individual. He also accepts that, at this point in history, signature is largely what makes art marketable, (Bürger produced this work in the early 1970s, but his reading does not acknowledge that *Fountain* did not wholly enter the market or general discourse at that time it was first produced). The material and historical circumstances that enable and lead to the pseudo-signature on *Fountain* are passed over even as the consequences of it are taken for granted. Specifically, *Fountain's* signature is never figured against the prevalent signing practices of the early 20th century. The fact that *Fountain* can be routinely thought of as a urinal 'signed by Marcel Duchamp' illustrates the hazy operation of signature, hovering between counterfeit and truth as something that relies on being taken for granted and accepted as genuine. Duchamp signed a urinal but not in his name, or, at least, not in his given name: the signature is transvestite. It is necessary to the function of signature in general that it is accepted *prima facie*. What Duchamp does with R. Mutt is expose this quality. R. Mutt is not merely executed as an

[23] Bürger, P. *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

autograph, it is a 'false' autograph and it was not merely designed to ease the passage of a mass-produced object into the art market, it was designed to affront a committee of initiates and solicit rejection from an open exhibition.

In *Kant After Duchamp*, Thierry De Duve comes near to indicating the importance of signature to *Fountain*, devoting some attention to the circuits of mediation that produced it in 1917. He writes about the implications of *Fountain's* appearance in 'The Blindman', (a journal produced in two issues by Duchamp in apparent association with Henri-Pierre Roché and Beatrice Wood around the time of the S.I.A. Exhibition), and describes *Fountain* as an enactment orchestrated by Duchamp through a nexus of social connections in which the qualities represented by the people and institutions involved coalesce around their names.[24] Imperative in this orchestration is Duchamp's own authorizing name, which appears to shift in proximity to the object and his various psuedonyms: distanced, perhaps it appears in sharpest focus. Besides 'producing' *Fountain* as a sculpture, Duchamp was one of the founder members of the organization that rejected it for exhibition; he was behind the name 'Richard Mutt' under which it was submitted to the S.I.A, and he organized publication (in 'The Blindman') of the photograph, taken by Alfred Stieglitz, which documented *Fountain*, (in fact, there is a strong case for stating that it is the photograph which enacts the Readymade). Of Stieglitz's photograph, De Duve says:

> …one can be certain that if Duchamp addressed Stieglitz it was not just to obtain a photograph. The photograph had to be signed, and what better signature than that of

[24] De Duve, T. *Kant After Duchamp* (Cambridge: MIT/October, 1996)

> Stieglitz, the artist, the maker of the American avant-garde, the former honorary vice-president of the Armory Show, the prestigious and irascible guru of 291…[25]

However, aside from indicating the erstwhile 'Sunday Painter', Louis Eilshemius, as R. Mutt's painterly 'Other' (for De Duve, Eilshemius is a shadow figuration of Duchamp's abandonment of painting), De Duve does not address the established practices and norms of what could lead to a counterfeit autograph being applied in black paint to a urinal in an effort to make it operate and be recognised as art. Perhaps, as with Bürger, this is because those practices and norms seem to be so commonplace and obvious as to be insignificant. Alternatively, it could be that signature is passed over because it seems to belong so prosiacally to an art that was of a different, disappearing order, the kind typified by the easel bound, figurative painting of a Sunday painter. The signed artwork seems - in 1917 - to be obsolete. Even in those discussions that take the mediation of *Fountain* seriously and explore the nature of the delay that permitted it to deploy within the theorizing of Conceptual Art, the materiality, history and effectiveness of the signature is taken for granted, without sufficient analysis. This thesis addresses that deficit.

1.1.5 DUCHAMP AND A NEW AESTHETIC REGIME

If R. Mutt might be considered the 'final' signature of an aesthetic regime De Duve styles as one in which art was governed by evaluative judgments, (by 'taste'), it is also styled one that is simultaneously the 'first' of a regime in which art is governed by declarations

[25] Ibid. p118

of eligibility, (by nomination). The title of De Duve's study, *Pictorial Nominalism*, derives from a note in Duchamp's *White Box* and generates Freudian psychoanalysis and Duchamp's avant-garde practice as historically delimited 'heuristic parallels'.[26] De Duve's method of heuristic parallelism involves discerning strong points of connection between two apparently incommensurate historicities and is described in *Pictorial Nominalism*. 'Pictorial Nominalism', fully in De Duve's consolidating work in *Kant After Duchamp,* describes a scheme in which the 'baptism' of an object - the 'choice' of it - can effect it as art. As Pictorial Nominalism, Duchamp's Readymades deliberately draw attention to the non-manual constructions at play in delivering 'everyday' objects as 'art', i.e. dissonant to self-similar objects in everyday life. Pictorial Nominalism reveals art as an 'autonymy', (a self-naming, autogenetic regime), and not as an 'autonomy', (the ideal and effective Modernist self-sufficient object).

In *Kant After Duchamp*, De Duve extrapolates a general scheme for art in which taste, (since the 18th century, the arbiter of aesthetics rationalized according to the ideals of 'beauty'), is displaced by nomination, represented *ipso facto* by the Readymade. The category of beauty is replaced by a category of art in which Kantian aesthetics have no place to negotiate. Duchamp is seen to usher in a conceptual anarchy in which 'anything goes' against the category of the beautiful because he appears to disavow taste: as an autonymy, art is an absolute heterogeneity in which the exercise of choice is the only necessary determinant - 'it is art if I say it is art'. Setting aside the complexities that determine 'I' as an institution empowered to choose effectively, (these complexities go to

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[26] De Duve, T. *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991)

the heart of what is at stake in signature), such a position on the Readymade styles it the result of a 'speech act' *avant-la-lettre*. De Duve accepts the basic condition that *after* Duchamp and the Readymade, irrespective of any residual artisanal or material qualities carried through by the appropriation of everyday objects, art *is* a field of absolute heterogeneity constructed and navigated by speech acts. As a field of absolute heterogenity, differences between the tangible and intangible qualities of art are levelled. In speech act theory, the issue of signature is foundational, and it is in speech act theory that the work of Derrida is indicated in proximity to both the Readymade and signature.

1.1.6 SPEECH ACT THEORY

Speech act theory was formulated in the 1950s by J. L. Austin in *How To Do Things With Words*. [27] According to his formulation, speech acts are performative utterances that accomplish actions or effects in the real world: Austin uses the example of wedding vows, which, recited according to convention, effect a change of status. Applied to the Readymade, speech act theory holds that in positing a urinal as a work of art, Duchamp effects it *as* such: he changes its status from a functional object to an artwork. Theoretically, the power to make art is a power to 'action' art, to bring it into view, not merely or principally to physically manufacture objects. In Austinian speech act theory, hand-written signatures are veritable and verifiable proxies guaranteeing 'presence': they

[27] Austin, J. L. *How To Do Things With Words* (Second Edition) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975)

represent speech acts in written form and are the means by which statements, declarations and confessions can be attributed to specific individuals. Signatures are empowered to say 'a speech act has taken place' and that power is derived from their physical connection to the signatory. If there is a tendency in visual art theory to treat the speech act as orientated (purely) towards transforming something that is manifestly not art into 'art', a tendency to which De Duve subscribes, that tendency entails ignoring the place that the speech act - as written signature - has potentialy had in the general scheme of art prior to Duchamp, in art that *is* manifestly 'art'. One of the consequences of tying the speech act to the Readymade is that it is seen only to relate to the transformation of pre-produced objects. Can the signature of Vincent Van Gogh on a painting be seen to mark a speech act in the same way as the appearance of the pseudo-signature on *Fountain* marks a speech act? Addressing this question marks a place where strong theoretical links between Duchamp and Derrida begin to intersect. There is no coherent body of work in this area: this thesis aims to define and draw attention to the gap and to begin to develop the grounds for considering Duchamp and Derrida fraternally. It advances a plea for understanding the continuing legacy of the written signature in dematerialised art practices.

1.1.7 THE DIVIDED SEAL: CECI N'EST PAS UN AUTOGRAPH

The title of my thesis derives from Derrida's definition of signature in SEC as an 'enigmatic paraph', a 'divided seal', at once unique and iterable. In SEC, Derrida engages

with Austin's formulation of the speech act and the essay represents his most direct engagement with written signatures. Most existing work that extends the construction of signature in SEC proceeds to positions principally established in philosophy, jurisprudence and literature, rather than in visual art, (thus John R. Searle's famous rejoinder to SEC, *Reiterating the Differences: A Reply To Derrida* was published in a journal devoted to literary criticism).[28] Neither is SEC the usual starting point for consideration of Derrida's theories in art and aesthetics. The segue between signature in literary, jurisprudential and pilosophical registers and aesthetics is not unproblematic on any of the grounds of iterability, originality, biography, body, trace or 'enigma' that appear to have particular emphasis in art. The relationship between Derrida's theorizing of signature in SEC and his engagement with visual art is complicated by his observation that there is a processual incompatibility between visual art, (which he takes to be paintings and sculptures), and the written signature, (which he sees as necessarily foreign to visual art form because it is alphabetic). Nonetheless, in *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts*, Peter Brunette & David Wills comment that:

> …it is the visual arts that bring the signature effect into clearer focus, for there the signature acts as a rigorous internal frame, defining the work as a commodity and assigning the limits on the basis of which the whole proprietorial institution will operate. Yet the signature is also foreign to what it defines, a piece of writing within the figural space that disturbs the homogeneity of the medium; what seals the work is therefore what breaks it open to reveal the otherness that resides within it. Conversely, the authority that the signature represents as a mark of authenticity and as institutional inscription is dispersed within figural space. Just as in Derrida's analyses of literature the proper name

[28] Searle, J. R. '*Reiterating the Differences: A Reply To Derrida*' , *Glyph* 1 (1977) pp198-208

> is found to operate as a common noun, so the signature in the painting becomes a series of lines or traits, participating in the graphic design, at the extreme, evoking the anonymity of the X.[29]

Signature is seen to have a role in defining artwork, and though there are hints that the artist's signature is something which completes artworks as commodities and its primary relationship is thus with the market, Brunette & Wills realise that signature operates on a sliding scale which runs from anonymity to renown, from coherence and simultaneity with medium and material to distance and peripheral attachment. The terms in which they describe signature foreground its potential as a radical action - dispersing, disturbing and breaking open.

Derrida, who considered the palpable materiality of Van Gogh's impasto in this interview with Brunette & Wills, states that 'Van Gogh signs with his body', meaning that in visual art, signature is implicated in every moment of production.[30] It is not just (or most importantly) an 'appended name'. However analysis of how appended names work is useful in revealing how ambiguous and invisible signatures also operate. Herman Rapaport points out that Derrida's understanding of the artist is predicated on a 'Kantian' notion of visual art, and certainly his engagement with visual art is notable for a lack of specific attention to the dematerialised practices which characterized the artistic milieu contemporaneous with the genesis and publication of SEC.[31] Perhaps Derrida's own 'blind spot' in this regard is to blame for the lack of attention paid to the many

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[29] Brunette, P. & Wills, D. (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p5

[30] Ibid. p15

[31] See Rapaport, H. 'Brushed Path, Slate Line, Stone Circle: On Martin Heidegger, Richard Long, and Jacques Derrida'. Ibid pp151-167

sympathetic parallels between his work and the work of Duchamp.[32] Equally, it is possible that Derrida saw no essential difference between 'Kantian' and 'post-Kantian' artforms, (he reads the the bodily signature of Van Gogh as equivalent to the appended name of Van Gogh: in a sense, he considers that issues of signature in art proceed from a position of dematerialisation 'always and already'). In general, Derrida treats the notion of dematerialisation with circumspection:

> It is not in itself a novelty or a mutation that the modes of appropriation are becoming spectral, are "dematerializing" [sic] (a very deceptive word, meaning that in truth they are moving from one king of matter to another and actually becoming all the more material, in the sense that they are gaining potential dynamis).[33]

Aside from 'Kantian' artworks, Derrida was concerned with the status of the photograph in 'Right of Inspection' and *Copy, Signature, Archive*: in the latter, he makes clear that the process of photographing is a signatory one.[34] This is an important point for consideration, (and relevant for reconfiguring the appreciation of *Fountain*), however it is one that requires the 'pre-photographic' analysis pursued in this thesis before it can be properly addressed.

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[32] One study (not concerned with signature) is Tucker, T. D. *Derridada: Duchamp as Readymade Deconstruction* (Lanham: Lexington, 2009)

[33] Derrida, J. *Paper Machine (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005) p56

[34] Plissart, M-F. & Derrida, J. *Right of Inspection* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998); Derrida, J. *Copy Signature Archive* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010)

1.2 METHODOLOGY

1.2.1 THE LIMITS OF A SEMIOTIC APPROACH

In advancing the notion that the contingency and importance of the signature R. Mutt on *Fountain* has been ignored or marginalized in critical and historical treatments of the Readymade and Duchamp's legacy, this thesis advances the notion that signature has been misunderstood and misplaced in art history in general. It is true that in the second half 20th century, in the wake of linguistic studies by Ferdinand Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss, signature began to be recognized as a subject for study. In art history, 'L'art de la signature', an essay which appeared in *Revue de l'Art* in 1974, is highly profiled as a source which initially propagated interest in the subject.[35] Not surprisingly at this time, there was a tendency to treat the issue of signature in terms of its semiotic potential. There are, however, serious limits in approaching signature semiotically, stemming from the fact that such approach is neither historically sensitive, nor philosophically reflexive. For example in his essay 'Semiotics of Signatures in Paintings', Claude Gandelman seeks to construct a semiotic grid for signatures in paintings based on Charles S. Peirce's categories of 'object', 'representamen', 'interpretant' and 'combinatory dynamics'.[36]

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[35] Chastel, A. et al. 'L'art de la signature', *Revue de l'Art* 26 (1974) pp8-54. This issue of *Revue de L'Art* is frequently cited in such academic work as there is: Kooper, E. S. 'Signature and Art and the Art of the Signature' in Burgess, G. (ed.) *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society (Liverpool 1980)* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981) pp223-231; Gandelman, C. 'Semiotics of Signatures in Paintings', *The American Journal of Semiotics* Vol. 3 No. 3 (1985) pp73-108. (A subsequent issue of *Revue de L'Art* (36/1976) returned to signature as a subject).

[36] Gandelman, ibid.

Gandelman's taxonomy does not respond to historical models as much as wholly split them from their context in order to squeeze them into exemplifying his typology, (he does not even consistently mention the dates of the works he uses to illustrate this typology).

Thus, the categorical difference between James Ensor's signature-as-bird-droppings in a drawing, *Les Squelettes Jouant Au Billard* (c.1890) (not dated by Gandelman) – an 'ironic' instance of 'self-persiflage' - is differentiated, despite stylistic sympathies, from Pisanello's signature in the painting *Virgin, St Anthony and St George* (c.1435-41) (again, not dated by Gandelman), which is rendered as blades of grass in the central foreground of the work on the basis that the latter is an 'iconic', 'non-integrated', 'figurative' signature. Gandelman does not apply similar descriptors to the former, so it is difficult to ascertain how he views it, (the signatures can be chronologically separated by some 500 years, but Gandelman is not concerned with this). If the difference in this example is neither stylistic nor historical, it seems to be quite an arbitrary distinction, based on a subjective appreciation of scatology and humour, not logic. Pisanello's painting is likewise contrasted with Manet's signature on a wine bottle in *Le Bar des Folies Bergères* (1881-82) (not dated by Gandelman): Manet's signature is an 'iconic', 'integrated' signature that is a 'dicent-indexical sinsign', presumably different from Ensor's signature on this basis. For all that Gandelman illustrates his text with compelling examples, because he has forced a 'Peircian' analysis on them - an analysis which floats free from history - his typology of 15 forms of signatures is frequently confusing, with

semiotic jargon obfuscating rather than clarifying the form and function of artists's signatures:

> *Qua representamen* signatures, therefore, can only be sinsigns and legisigns, sinsign because they are unique, concrete signs actually realized on canvas; legisigns because they are necessary 'art historical particles' belonging to a symbolic rule elaborated mainly between the 17th and the 19th century… As objects (object-signs) we have seen already that they belong to three categories: icon, index and symbol. As interpretants, signatures can either be rhematic or dicent. Rhematic when they merely designate their "contact" in the more basic manner, as thumbprints or handwritten names. But signatures can also be dicent whenever they tell us something about the artist (Holbein is Hohl Bein like, the artist is (is not) Christ-like (Ensor)…Signatures can be indexic: indeed they are usually seen as indices. If so they are either rhematic-indexic-sinsigns or dicent-indexic-sinsigns…[37]

At the very least, the circumstances that lead Gandelman to equate thumbprints and handwritten names cannot be fully explored in a semiotic grid. His semiotic approach to signature is unclear and inconsistent, caught between idiosyncracies of individual artists and paintings and the urge to reflect those idiosyncracies *fully* within a general taxonomy based on a pre-determined, abstract grid.

Gandelman allows particularities of depiction to lead him in constructing his taxonomy. He does not attempt to look at the broad historical trends that signatures necessarily embody, preferring to construe the practice of signing as the result of individual habit and preference. At the level of appearance, the behaviour of signature is at once too general

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[37] Ibid. p104

and too particular to fit any taxonomy or history. Gandelman has no theoretical basis for understanding signature as a process, consequently his work is mired in the seemingly expressive potential that artists's signatures seem to possess. Gandelman is, in the end, concerned with how signatures appear rather than what they do. His semiotic grid works against signature's ability to play many roles simultaneously and it prevents him conceptualising signature's functions. Signature exists in a state of flux. To understand the signature on *Fountain* semiotically according to Gandelman's scheme would entail fixing it on a semiotic grid according to its substrate, form and wordplay, leading to a serious misunderstanding of what it actually does.[38]

1.2.2 CHALLENGING THE 'CLASSIC' POSITION

Although 'L'art de la signature' is an important marker to consider in developing a critique of signature in art, a specific discussion of signature occurs earlier than this in the work of Jean Pierre Rossignol, who published *Trois Dissertations: Sur L'Inscription de Delphes… Sur L'Ouvrage D'Anaximènes de Lampsaque… Sur La Signature des Oeuvres D'Art* in 1850.[39] As an antiquarian, Rossignol's field of interest was Ancient Greek and Roman artefacts, and it is significant that in many of the discussions stemming from the

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[38] Gandelman also looks at signature as subversion, though his discussion suffers from some of the problems inherent in adopting a semiotic approach. See Gandelman, C. 'By Way of Introduction: Inscriptions as Subversion' *Visible Language* Vol. 23 No. 2-3. (Spring/Summer 1989) pp140-169

[39] Rossignol, J-P. *Trois Dissertations: Sur L'Inscription de Delphes…Sur L'Ouvrage D'Anaximènes de Lampsaque…Sur La Signature des Oeuvres D'Art*. (Paris: Auguste Durand, 1862)

'L'art de la signature', notwithstanding the 'indexical' place of rhematic thumb-prints (which open the issue of signature out directly onto Neolithic art), the focus has been on analyzing and describing artworks produced during and after the Renaissance, rather than any contemporary, 19th century or Ancient examples. The bias towards accepting the Renaissance as the key period for the study of signature has been reinforced by the publication of a clutch of recent studies examining its practice at that time, both in general and in the work of individual artists.[40] This bias is indicative of the (still strong) tendency to view the Renaissance as *the* point of origin for the history of artists, if not for 'art' in general. The general assumption is that prior to the Renaissance, those involved in the production of images and objects are to be viewed as 'artisans' rather than 'artists' and are thus 'anonymous'. Artisans are perceived to lack an artistic self-consciousness or awareness of their creativity invidiuality, and therefore signature - a mark of creative individuation - is seen to be irrelevant for them. The fact that the majority of pre-Renaissance images and objects are unsigned is accepted as evidence of this fact, and the default position is that pre-Renaissance signatures were unimportant or unknown.

The basis for these assumptions needs to be questioned. Firstly, the class of 'unsigned' objects is comprised of those that might be determined as coming within the ambit of art history by virtue of their painted or sculpted forms, so there must be classes of objects

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[40] For example: Bohn, B. 'The construction of artistic reputation in Seicento Bologna: Guido Reni and the Sirani', *Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 25 No. 4 (2010) pp52-79; Goffen, R. 'Raphael's Designer Labels: From the Virgin Mary to La Fornaria' *Artibus et Historiae* Vol, 24 No. 48 (2003), pp123-42; Matthew L. C. 'The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance pictures', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80 No. 4 (1998) pp616-48; Rubin. P 'Signposts of Invention: Artists's Signatures in Italian Renaissance Art', *Art History*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp563-599 (September 2006)

and images for which are excluded, (goldsmiths, for example, have a long history of applying monograms to their work, but their work is not historically constituted as 'art'). Secondly, there is a risk of overlooking the importance or purpose of those pre-Renaissance, art historically enabled objects that were signed. Thirdly, there is the risk of assuming that, from the Renaissance onwards, art historically enabled objects have a straight-forward relationship with signature to the extent that it can be assumed even when it is not present, (indeed, signatures are not present in most Renaissance and post-Renaissance work, despite their use a measure of individuation). Consequently, signature is seen to be relevant only for 'creative' individuals.

The default position assumes that written signatures have played an important role in secularizing art during the Renaissance, (in securing a place for art outside liturgical service), and to have produced a gradual but definite bifurcation in terminology: 'artisan' (*artesano*) and 'artist' (*artista*) are both terms which date from the 14th century in Italy.[41] According to John Roberts, the terminological bifurcation marks a new division of labour in studio workshops as the work of the artist became associated with *disegno* – preparatory drawing and design – and the more mundane work of preparing canvases, grinding pigments, blocking in backgrounds and peripheral elements was entrusted to skilled assistants.[42] Defined by tasks in this way, artists and artisans attenuate along

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[41] 'artist, n.' OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11237?rskey=eZA2IK&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed 27th July 2013).

'artisan, n.' OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11235 (accessed 27th July 2013).

[42] Roberts, J. *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (London: Verso, 2007)

hierarchical lines of cultural and social status, with the former becoming 'elevated' and more skilled according to the division of labour in the painter's studio. There are some grounds for suggesting that the division of labour necessitates signature as a device for collecting differentiated tasks together, and as such it belongs to artists who take credit for all the work done. So, in the division of labour, the artwork itself becomes subject to division, and the tasks which must be fulfilled into order to produce it are separated and categorised as either 'artistic' or 'artisanal' – it is the artistic tasks which are taken to be signed. Despite this, the appearance of personal signatures at this time does not – by itself - mark a schism between artists and artisans: if the artisan is imagined as 'anonymous' this is counteracted by historical exemplars for Renaissance artisans were at least as likely to have marked their work with a signifiying stamp or monogram as artists were to use signatures.

Looming large in the routine that assigns signature to artists rather than artisans is Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Great Artists*, a foundational text for much art history between the 17th and 20th centuries.[43] Having placed a narrative emphasis on individual 'greatness', Vasari initiated the means of establishing the European canon of 'Great Art' and the history of artists which Heinrich Wölfflin took exception to.[44] According to Griselda Pollock & Rosika Parker, 'canonicity' is the disingenuous movement of culturally vested interests presented as *fait accompli*, a naturalized notion of what is

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[43] Vasari, G. *The Lives of the Artists* trans. Bondanella J. C. & Bondanella P., (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998)

[44] Wölfflin called for 'art history without names'. Wölfflin, H. *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1950)

(already) great and to be universally valued.[45] In *Differencing the Canon*, canonicity is seen to establish self-perpetuating hegemonies, ignoring and excluding any artworks or artists arising illegitimately; it is:

> a discursive formation which constitutes the objects/texts it selects as the products of artistic mastery, and, thereby, contributes to the legitimisation of white masculinity's exclusive identification with creativity and with Culture. To learn about Art, through canonical discourse, is to know masculinity as power and meaning, and all three as identical with Truth and Beauty.[46]

In the face of such naturalization, contrary to what might be expected, signatures are structurally problematic because they are necessarily *particular*, and when signature is seen solely as a virtue of the artist endowed with 'genius', (and is thereby a 'higher' valence of the artisan), the irruptive potential of 'the particular' can be overlooked. In her work on the 17th century Siranis, (father and daughter painters, Giovanni and Elizabetta), Babette Bohn observes that Elizabetta signed far more works than did her father or any of her (male) Bolognese counterparts. Bohn suggests this may have been down to Elizabetta's struggle for recognition, the misattribution of her works (to her father) and/or to the exotic, taboo appeal of owning a painting made by a woman.[47] In part, this thesis extends the challenge to the naturalized assumptions that read artists's signatures as expressively marking genius. It describes the potential that signature has as a pollutant, as a disruptive social, rather than creatively stabilizing, element.

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45 Pollock, G. & R. Parker *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Discourse and the Writing of Art's Histories* (Oxford: Routledge, 1999); Parker, R. & G. Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Pandora, 1981)

46 Pollock & Parker, ibid. p9

47 Bohn, op. cit.

1.3 THESIS PLAN

1.3.1 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Aside from the specialist studies to which have been referred to, there is not much sustained analysis of signature in art history (at least in English). More often than not, as a subject, 'signature' does not even make the indices of art histories or theories, whether those are broadly scoped or not. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no similar attempt to understand signature functionally and apply that functional understanding to a broad range of historical examples. My thesis works to address the gap in four principal ways: it expands and connects the periods for which signature is thought to be a relevant consideration; it shows how signature operates as a problem and pollutant in opposition to purist readings of art history; it states the case for considering signature's curious relationship with temporality to be of primary significance, and it considers how signature acts to produce hierarchies of realism through contests with materiality. Essentially, it treats signature as a process which produces appearances by using the historically variable appearance of signatures to locate and orientate the signatory process.

Finding limits in the semiotic approach to signature typified by Gandelman, I hope to provide an historical basis for understanding the signature, R. Mutt, and in doing so, aim to establish new lines of material inheritance for it. This is a unique approach to *Fountain*

in the considerably populated field of Duchampian scholarship. Consequent to the establishment of this foundation for *Fountain*, I also suggest that the place for understanding the speech act in the general scheme of art prior to Duchamp ought to be recast. The appearance of signatures on 'conventional', 'Kantian' artworks potentially establishes those artworks as operationally equivalent speech acts to *Fountain*, regardless of their *prima facie* status as paintings and sculptures. Signature suggests a way of disregarding the empircial substrate in order to pursue the artist as a function in history. To put it another way, I suggest that as a signature, R. Mutt expresses continuity between *Fountain* and the paintings and sculptures which precede it, and I question whether it can be understood to arise *ex nihilo* as the art of an entirely new aesthetic order.

The clutch of fairly recent specialist Renaissance studies I have already mentioned look at the practice of signature in order to show how it might be seen, variously, to have reflected the movement of art in terms of 'invention', 'market', 'transgression' and incipient 'feminism'. They tend not look beyond the confines of a specific period to describe the precedents for signature, nor do they interpret the practices and artists that follow. Largely, they seem to accept that the Renaissance is when the practice of signing artworks meaningfully began. One of the aims of this thesis is to illustrate the fact that signature is subject to stylistic and functional changes on either side of the Renaissance – it does not 'begin' then. Whilst the importance of the Renaissance for the study of signature is acknowledged, the thesis takes a much longer historical view overall and makes the case for considering the study of signature in art as a general element, i.e. not solely as a chronologically or subject-delimited interest for specialist historians. The

visibility, location and function of signature is historically variable and it is a relevant theoretical and formal consideration before, during and after the Renaissance.

On this basis, I suggest that Duchamp used signature to take apart the structural legacies that have contributed to establishing the artist, and that these legacies are not just found in immediate 19th century predecessors, but in a long, complicated history of art production that extends further back beyond the Renaissance, through the Byzantine era into Antiquity. In doing so, I ask whether R. Mutt allows us to seek historical models for the artist other than those that are currently accepted: is the figure of the medieval donor as necessary in the figuration of the 'proto-artist' as the artisan? Is this view is permitted when the artist is read as a function and the history of art is viewed with a post-Duchampian model in mind, rather than a Romantic or Modernist one? Academic analysis of examples shows that the appearance of signatures on Antique artefacts can be theoretically underpinned by a performative aspect.[48] Derrida's signatory theory underscores this work by demonstrating that signatories are not intact throughout the process of signing, nor are they entire to begin with. It interrupts purist tendencies in readings of art history, questions the nature and locus of creativity and addresses the notion that artistic presence can ever be fully restituted. In its particularity, signature is indicative of an emanicipatory impurity and indicates an unstable subject. It demonstrates the impossibility of textual hyigene and I look to Marcy L. North's study of Renaissance

[48] Osbourne, R. 'The Art of Signing in Ancient Greece', (Spring 2010), *Arethusa,* Vol. 43, No. 2, Spring 2010

authorship to show how ragged authorial boundaries can be.[49] Michel Camille's study of manuscript marginalia shows how signature can mark authorship indirectly, as an 'aside' which marks social affinity rather than individual, creative ambition.[50] I contend that anonymity varies in visibility and interpretability and that signature is the device which modulates that. The slippery, symbiotic relationships between signature, text and author mean that signature is at once the place for 'lowest common denominator' authorship and for the radical equivalence of subject and thing. In this, Derrida's reading of Francis Ponge is of particular relevance.[51]

Throughout my thesis, the complicated issue of the unusual temporal claims signature makes is of significance; particularly so in terms of the relationships between temporality, materiality and signature. In SEC, Derrida demonstrates that signature includes absence as a structural necessity and this absence is an important factor in how signature behaves in contrast to how it appears to behave. Not only is signature a *revenant* which 'begins' by coming back, it is an apparition of permanence, a guise which has the appearance of fact, a *general maintenance*. Signature has a function to play in the act of witness, and I address this in relation to the signature which appears on Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) (Fig. 2). The implication that signature marks an act of witness requires an acceptance that it simultaneously marks an act of completion: if signature is not a mark of completion - if it does not attempt to set seal - can it have any

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[49] North, M. *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003)

[50] Camille, M. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion, 1992)

[51] Derrida, J. *Signsponge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984)

persuasion as an act of witness? Thus, the type of witness artists attest to when their practice is allied to naturalism is also addressed. If naturalism was a key driver in the relocation of materiality in Renaissance artworks, (as I contend), the role of *trompe l'oeil* in permitting artistic skill to be asserted as the primary value in an artwork is of critical importance. On this basis, I suggest that art history can accommodate a narrative that sees the artist emerges against the object rather than out of the artisan during the early Renaissance. In turn, this emergence can be linked to a 'decluttering' - a clearing of space in 12th century illuminated manuscripts which become visually less dense in order that scripts may become more legible.

1.3.2 OUTLINE

My thesis falls into two parts, with the Introduction listed as Chapter 1 and the Conclusion as Chapter 7. The first part concentrates on Derrida's conception of signature and his engagement with visual art, the second part on a functional analysis of signature in specific art historical exemplars. In Part 1, Chapter 2 concentrates on Derrida's construction of signature through several key texts, emphasizing its importance in Derrida's conceptualization of 'presence'. Derrida understands 'presence' as *general maintenance*, a transcendental and impossible 'presentness' on which speech, the voice and entirety of being depend. His conception of the signature incorporates an element of temporality that interrupts 'presence'. Whilst signatures aspire to verify and reconstitute the signatory by proxy, Derrida demonstrates that the operations of signature mean that a

signatory 'source' can never be conclusively guaranteed. I argue that signatures can be figured as 'lowest common denominators' and that recognition of their operative processes represents the opportunity to configure an emancipatory impurity.

Chapter 3 focuses on Derrida's more direct engagements with visual art, concentrating specifically on 'Restitutions', an essay which forms part of a collection published as *The Truth in Painting*.[52] 'Restitutions' is an important essay for my thesis as it illustrates how signature operates art historically through an inscribed name, that of Van Gogh. Derrida demonstrates how the vested interests of competing ideological claims attempt to exploit this signature, which never wholly belongs to those who claim it nor who signed it. Consideration of 'Restitutions' is supported by critiques of the work of other theorists relevant to the notions of 'sacrament' and 'autograph'.

Part 2 looks at specific art historical exemplars in which the signature of the artist can be seen to perform in historically contingent ways. Under analysis, the exemplars demonstrate that despite particularity, signature in general (always) returns to the Derridean principle that signature institutes, and is instituted by, division. Historical analyses of signatory practices demonstrate the passage of authority from institution to individual, (this is never a wholly 'complete' or successful transaction). That passage can be traced through different significations of materiality - from monograms that derive from signets or seals (in the control of incumbents) to handwritten autographs (ascribed

[52] Derrida, J. *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

to speculative producers). The field of study concerned with signets and seals is a significant one in itself and I do not have scope to address it specifically in this thesis.

Each of the three chapters in Part 2 of my thesis proceeds under a subtitle relating to the function of signature. Firstly to claim presence and 'presentness' on behalf of the artist; secondly, to assert claims to 'property' and inheritance; and finally, to guarantee originality. The chapter subtitles allude to an interplay of tense and temporality: past, present and future and the potential for (future) studies which reframe ideas about 'place, property and promise' through signature is implied. Chapter 4 - 'Signature as Witness: I was here' - looks at the signatory practice of Van Eyck, especially as it abuts the place of naturalism in art historical and critical discourse. In its vocabulary, Van Eyck's signature on the *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) represents a general shift in significance away from material to artist in terms of value. It also represents the point at which Van Eyck's civic (non-artistic) roles are imported into the image. Chapter 5 - 'Signature as Self-awareness: This is Mine' - looks at claims that signature denotes the increasing self-consciousness of the artist as a creative individual. Special consideration is given to the reading of the 12th century signature of 'Gislebertus' as that of an artist, and to aspects of Albrecht Dürer's practice as it gives onto notions of intellectual property and claims to ownership. Chapter 6 - 'Signature as Standardisation: I promise' - reviews the positions of several art historians who have considered the operation of signature in Renaissance paintings relative to the market. The role of signature as an influence on the itinerary of Grand Tourists and on the (related) construction of museum collections is considered alongside the place of signature in effecting guarantees of quality and provenance. I also

consider the case for stating that the profile and signatory practice of Gustav Courbet is a primary precedent in the history of *Fountain*.

In Conclusion, on the basis of the theoretical work in Part 1 and the historical analysis in Part 2, having assessed how R. Mutt works on *Fountain* in relation to specific precedents, I return to reframing the questions I posed with reference to Relational Art, namely: why should the specificity of an individual matter for art? What is the place of provenance in dematerialised artworks? Do artworks avoid circuits of commodification by virtue of their dematerialisation? Does collaboration necessarily blur the imprint of individual authorial status?

PART 1

2. DERRIDA AND SIGNATURE

This Chapter deals with Derrida's construction of signature through various general texts and interviews, with a particular emphasis on SEC. Although the first English translation did not appear until 1977, SEC was written in a period in the early 1970s characterized by the publication of several texts and papers collected together in *Dissemination*, *Positions* and *The Margins of Philosophy* (in which SEC first appeared). These were largely concerned with extending and working into the notion of *différance*, Derrida's conception of the mutuality of empirical difference and temporal delay. A short text, SEC works through the mechanics of that which presents itself as signature against Austin's conception of the speech act, in which written signatures are accepted as verification. For Derrida, this verification is a 'having-been present in a past *now* or present *[maintenant]*' of the signatory 'which will remain a future now or present *[maintenant]*'.[53] Consequently, he reads in Austin a presumption that the subject (who signs) is a self-sufficient totality, and that is what he questions. Using ideas connected to the non-presence of signatory in the act of signing, the structural necessity of citationality and the operational effect of *'iterability'*, Derrida dissimulates the *general maintenance* (transcendental presentness) that underscores Austin's speech act. He contends that a

[53] Derrida, SEC, op. cit. p20

handwritten signature cannot function as 'an enigmatic paraph', a unique and unrepeatable mark, as is commonly assumed. It is structurally fractured and always gives onto other instances of itself. The 'unique' signature cannot conclusively (non-parasitically) 'tether to source', for that would require an immobile, finite point of origin as 'source', and a 'tether' which channels or expresses the specificity of the link between a 'signature-event' (the source) and a 'signature-form' (the signature) seamlessly, without external reference or *différanc*e, i.e. a paraph cannot conclusively evidence that event and form have been tied together permanently, irrevocably, as an absolute, hermetic singularity. This chapter explores in some detail this position, both prefacing and following it through several other texts, (by Derrida and by other theorists).

2.1 SIGNATURE AS PRESENCE

2.1.1 PLATO'S PHARMACY

In order to generate a useful conception of the place of 'presence' in Derrida's thought, it is worth prefacing my consideration of SEC with a consideration of a slightly earlier essay, 'Plato's Pharmacy', which appears in *Dissemination*.[54] In it, Derrida, building on *Of Grammatology* – a ground-breaking work which questions the ideological demotion of 'writing' in comparison to 'speech' - takes issue with the naturalized (occluded) structures of metaphysics which privilege 'presentness' and 'presence' as originary truth,

[54] Derrida, J. *Dissemination* (London & New York: Continuum, 2004) pp69-186

and he links this to the perpetuation of hierarchical patriarchy.[55] He sees metaphysics perpetuating Western philosophy's vested interest - 'as violent as it is impotent' - and he traces the operation of that vested interest in translations of Classical philosophy which privilege speech over writing. The patriarchal tradition polarizes cultural constructs and proceeds by way of binaries which privilege one pole over another: 'life' is preferred to 'death'; father preferred to mother; first preferred to second, inside to outside, good to evil, seriousness to play etc. 'Deconstruction' is a process of infinite dissimulation which works against the naturalization of presence and this patriarchy. It is alert to those slips in language which belie ideological reliance on notions of uncontestable authority.

'Plato's Pharmacy' is a practical exercise in deconstruction in which Derrida questions translation of the word '*pharmakon*' as it appears in Plato's dialogue, *Phaedrus*. For Derrida, *Phaedrus* is a demonstrably ambivalent text in the sense it 'affirms itself and effaces itself at once'.[56] On the one hand, this ambivalence has led to its marginality and distance from the Platonic canon: Derrida chose *Phaedrus* partly because it was marginalised and the ideological relationship between centre and periphery is fundamental to understanding deconstruction.[57] On the other, its ambivalent themes make it an appealing example through which Derrida can examine issues flowing from the privileging of presence.

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55 Derrida, J. *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997)

56 Ibid. p72

57 Burke, S. *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008)

At the beginning of 'Plato's Pharmacy', Derrida remarks that the established dismissal of *Phaedrus* as the product of Plato's juvenilia was controverted in the early 20th century by a renewed dismissal of it as the product of Plato's senility, a neat illustration of the instrumental use of age (a marginal consideration) to dismiss work from 'the canon' of the philosopher's prime. Either too young, or too old - for 'almost twenty-five centuries' - Plato was not seen to be fully present to himself when he produced *Phaedrus*.[58] Canonicity works like a gravitational field pulling together those core works that are deemed to define and 'present' the author, relegating to the margins – to the outer orbit – those that are not. Age is one empirical criterion that might be used as a determinant of eligibility to the 'canon' of the individual and/or of the cultural field: gender, sexuality, ethnicity might be others.

Phaedrus stages an encounter between Socrates and Phaedrus, who has a (written) copy of a speech by Lysisas secreted in the folds of his cloak: this is the '*pharmakon*'. Phaedrus confesses that he has not learned Lysias's speech by heart, which is why he carries the scroll. The scroll represents 'words that are deferred, reserved, enveloped, rolled up, words that force one to wait for them in the form and under cover of a solid object, letting themselves be desired.'[59] The possibility of recall is facilitated by the act of writing which is seen to exist at a degree of remove from speech, at a degree of remove from 'truth'. By virtue of this, 'truth' cannot be written. Derrida contends that when the *pharmakon* scroll is styled as 'narcotic' (and this is an etymological possibility), the written word is viewed with suspicion, as something not fully constituted and

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58 Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', op. cit. p72

59 Ibid. p76

wholesome, as something not to be trusted. Plato depicts Socrates reclining in allegorical surrender before the scroll. Figuratively, the written speech has a simultaneously narcotic and erotic effect on him and he is prone (incapacitated) when Phaedrus agrees to read it to him. Derrida suggests that here, the written word is seen to demonstrate the capacity 'to lead astray', to suspend volition.

The word *Pharmakon* might be translated as narcotic, poison, drug or philter, (connotatively 'detrimental'), but it may also be translated as remedy or recipe, (connotatively 'beneficial'), and Derrida argues that successive translations have suppressed the beneficial translation of *pharmakon* in order to privilege the self-sufficient 'origin' or 'source' which is given proper expression only in 'live' speech (written texts are poisons not remedies). He contends that in the service of speech and metaphysics, translations of Classical texts have routinely neutralized such citational play in which words inscribe meanings ambivalently within themselves and the neutralization is ideological.

In *Phaedrus*, the encounter between Phaedrus and Socrates is followed by an account of the latter recalling a story concerning Theuth, the Egyptian god of numbers, calculation, geometry and astronomy, and Thaumus, King of Egypt. Theuth presents writing to Thaumus as an aid to memory for the use of all his subjects. Thaumus, as Ammon - King of Kings - adjudicates on the usefulness of Theuth's invention and decries it, declaring that it will produce forgetfulness in those who learn to use it because they will not learn to exercise their memory, they will not learn by heart. Learning 'without instruction' will

give them the appearance of having wisdom, but they will not have true wisdom for wisdom (and truth) must be embodied, must be living (and must be passed between living beings): it must be verifiably transferred in a process that mimics inheritance. Such a contextualization of wisdom and memory as 'living', organic and entire is counterposed to writing as prosthesis and mechanics. External to the unified subject, the living body and memory, wisdom and truth are seen to die. Consequently, writing is a necrophiliac art, (it is also, in the construction of the author, a murderous art, killing the living voice in every letter). Prefaced by the effect of the scroll/*pharmakon* on Socrates, the mechanistic remembrance (*hypnomnesis*), enabled by writing, is not to be trusted. It is conceptually bound to deceit and opposed to living memory (*mneme*), absolute presence and 'presentness'. Inferior to speech, writing nonetheless has the power to threaten the originary cohesion which speech assumes for itself.

The figuring of the King - 'Thaumus' - by Socrates allows Derrida to figure the regal principle of speech as the source of value which engenders the hierarchical structuring of binary oppositions. As the source of value, the principle of speech manifests as 'capital', conceptually connected to *capita* - 'the head'. It is thereby accorded to an originary, kingly father:

> The figure of the father is, of course, the figure of the good (*agathon*). Logos *represents* what it is indebted to: the father who is also chief, capital and good(s). Or rather *the* chief, *the* capital, *the* good(s). *Pater* in Greek means all that at once. Neither translators nor commentators of Plato seem to have accounted for the play of these schemas.[60]

[60] Ibid. p86

The hierarchy that the regal principle of speech engenders is economic. Related to these expressions of the principle of speech, and their intimacy with the notion of what is *proper*, is the configuration of 'genius'. Genius has a important role in the construction of art history and thereby, a close relationship to issues involving signature, so it is worth expanding upon the notion of it here.

2.1.2 GENIUS: THE HEAD OF SPEECH

In *Gender and Genius*, Christine Battersby constructs a history for genius that takes account of its conceptualization as a male – and kingly - attribute. Battersby traces the etymology of the word genius (It. *genio*) to its Latin root (*genius*). She relates this to the 'divine forces associated with, and protective of, male fertility' and the Roman cults of genius as *paterfamilias*.[61] Of the *paterfamilias* she says:

> The *genius* was not only connected with the vital forces of the *gens*, but also with the ground that it owned. The dependence of city life on continued land ownership might explain why the worship of agricultural deities persisted even after the elite moved into town …All land within boundary stones was watched over and imbued with the *genius* of the *gens* as represented by the paterfamilias. There is thus a connection between the celebrated *genius loci,* 'genius of place' and the rites associated with the virility and divinity of the paterfamilias. [62]

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[61] Battersby, C. *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (London: The Women's Press, 1989) p37

[62] Ibid. p75

Paterfamilias is the heritable status as head of the family, intimately connected to rights concerning property and ownership.[63] In the context of a reference to Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* - 'which is often credited with having invented the modern conception of genius' - Battersby looks at a related word *ingenium* (It. *ingenio*) which underpins the English terms ingenuity, ingeniousness etc.[64] *Ingenium* was associated with the 'executive power' of reason, good judgment and knowledge, talent, wit and dexterity. Battersby specifically mentions *ingenium* in relation to mimesis. Crucially for this thesis, the interplay between *genius* and *ingenium* can be seen to reiterate in the interplay between speech and writing.

Considering the construction of artistic genius, Battersby acknowledges the Renaissance as the time when a change in the status of the arts and artists relative to the Middle Ages *resurrected* presumptions of patriarchal genius in favour of the individual (male) artist. Those who manifested *ingenium* - practiced skill and dexterity - were gradually accorded 'spirit' in derivation from the procreative force of the *gens*. To paraphrase this movement, a pendulum begins to swing from *ingenium* to *genius* between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. *Ingenium* was gradually subsumed in *genius*, a subsumption that produced the 'modern' notion of genius during the 18th century:

> sometime during the seventeenth century, the two different words 'genius' and 'ingenuity' collapsed into each other. It is not easy to put an exact date on the blending of the two concepts since modern histories of ideas also conflate the two term. But certainly by the start of the eighteenth century the two Latin words and the two corresponding

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63 On the origins and conceptualization of 'genius' see also: Agamben, G. *Profanations* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2007); Williams, R. *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1983) p143

64 Ibid. p37

> English words were no longer sharply distinguished…. It is only in the eighteenth century that the term 'genius' begins to be in general use in anything like the modern sense. It is only when the two Latin terms *genius* and *ingenium* merge that our modern concept of genius emerges. [65]

For Battersby, (writing at the end of the 1980s), Romanticism vaunts the artist /genius as heroic (male). It is a 'disease' that professional art critics and academics like to pretend has been purged from contemporary conceptions of the 'artist':

> Post-structuralists assure us that the author is dead, adding their voices to previous generations of Marxist critics who have undermined the authority and isolation of the lone author. But in popular culture we find the old vocabulary, and the figure of the artist as hero, as alive and well as ever. Which pictures are bought, which books are read, which plays performed, which films are shown in art centres is largely a product of an aesthetics which assumes the centrality of the author to the work of art. [66]

Despite being implicitly bracketed by Battersby as one of these 'post-structuralists', Derrida never *explicitly* proclaims the author as 'dead'. His philosophical enterprise is founded on the notion that 'authoring' is a process which proceeds in liminal territories. In a real sense the author never dies, having never lived. Appreciation of this is crucial to developing an understanding of how Derrida figures signature functioning. Speech, which serves presence and patriarchy, is opposed to the 'capital cut' that deconstruction seeks to execute. The 'pure event', 'pure origin' is a 'brand' or 'pole', 'a certain brandished erection and a certain head of speech that is cut off' by deconstructive

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[65] Ibid. p39
[66] Ibid. p21

reading; by the recognition of irreducible polysemy.[67] Anonymity is headless, and writing - *écriture féminine* - which threatens everywhere to detach from source, is a continual threat to decapitate. There can be no feminism without the capital cut.

2.1.3 SIGNATURE EVENT CONTEXT / LIMITED INC a b c…

Unlike 'Plato's Pharmacy', SEC does not open a gambit through the refiguring of the work of a Classical philosopher. Derrida chooses to frame his argument initially through Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, an 18th century French philosopher and linguist, before generating momentum through a response to Austin. In the opinion of Searle, who was motivated to 'defend' Austin in *Reiterating the Differences,* SEC is an obtuse misreading of *How To Do Things With Words*.[68] In turn, replying to Searle, Derrida observes that Searle is minded to assert a claim to Austin's legacy as a 'legitimate' heir. [69] Thus, for Derrida, Searle is interested in asserting the primacy of source, capital and authority as represented in the father/king (who represents the 'Head of Speech').

Posthumously published, *How To Do Things With Words* formulates the category of verbal utterances as 'performative' (more specifically, 'illocutionary') when they accomplish (or 'perform') actions in the very act of their utterance. This performative aspect makes them speech acts: illocution is frequently exemplified by the recitation of

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67 Derrida, 'Dissemination', ibid. p332
68 Searle, op. cit.
69 Derrida, 'Ltd Inc a b c…' op. cit.

nuptial vows that effect the change of marital status at a wedding. In Austin's terms, a speech act cannot be effected unless there is a coherence of circumstances in which speaker converges with convention in an event which can be accepted as 'valid'. Derrida takes issue with Austin's insistence on respecting the complete integrity of the performative form because speech acts necessarily appeal to conditions outside of themselves in order to become effective - there can be no 'absolute coherence':

> Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not in some way identifiable as a "citation"? Not that citationality in that case is of the same sort as in a theatrical play, a philosophical reference, or the recitation of a poem. That is why there is a relative specificity, as Austin says, a "relative purity" of performatives. But this relative purity does not emerge in opposition to citationality or iterability.[70]

For Austin, the speech act must be wholly intentional (controlled) and wholly complete, singular and 'univocal'. It assumes control of 'truth'. Searle criticized Derrida's reading of Austin on the grounds that he mounted 'an attack on the idea of writing as intended meaning'.[71] However, what Derrida does is to interrupt 'the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act', suggesting that there is a *residue* that escapes such totalization, and the speech at is not 'true' *per se*.[72] Derrida says that intention cannot be conclusively guaranteed, not that it doesn't exist as motivation. Just as the ambivalence of *pharmakon* as remedy and/or poison is suppressed

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70 Derrida, SEC, op. cit. p18
71 Searle, op. cit. p199
72 Derrida, ibid. p14

in translation, so Austin's understanding of the speech act's *conclusive* tethering to source suppresses its 'structural parasitism', its 'irreducible polysemy'.

Derrida alleges that Austin does not recognize citationality at play in speech acts despite remarking on the necessity of convention in effecting them. If a speech act is successful only when it conforms to the conditions of convention, it necessarily cites those conditions despite the fact that citation is the circumstance that produces 'infelicity'. For Derrida, infelicity is admitted to the performative at a structurally necessary level. The speech act cannot be 'faithful' if it incorporates conventions. The implied distance from infelicity cannot be obliterated, nor quotation marks erased. Presence/presentness cannot be conclusively established. The speech act is not 'true', entire or self-sufficient because it accomplishes an act. For Austin, speech acts that *seem* to operate as citations - an actor delivering lines, for example - are 'parasitic' (a metaphor loaded with negative connotation) on 'ordinary language' (on the observable success of 'proper' speech acts). Derrida replies that:

> In excluding the general theory of this structural parasitism, does not Austin, who nevertheless claims to describe the facts and events of ordinary language, pass off as ordinary an ethical and teleological determination (the univocity of the utterance…)…what Austin excludes as an anomaly, exception, "non-serious", citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of general citationality - or rather a general iterability - without which there would not even be a "successful" performative….a successful performative is necessarily an "impure" performative.[73]

[73] Ibid. p17

Austin's slip to ordinary language and purity admits that occluded aspect of the metaphysical that amounts to a naturalization of presence. He denies the productive role of infelicity, in order to tether the speech act to a phenomenologically stable source. Austin privileges speech over writing.

One of the strong connections between 'Plato's Pharmacy' and SEC concerns the undertsanding of presence that Derrida's signatory theory proceeds on. What appears as 'living memory' in 'Plato's Pharmacy' appears as 'source', 'transcendental presentness' and general *maintenance* in SEC :

> By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical non-presence of the signer. But, it will be claimed, the signature also marks and retains a having-been present in a past *now* or present *[maintenant]* which will remain a future now or present *[maintenant]*, thus in a general *maintenant* in the transcendental form of presentness *[maintenance]*. That general *maintenance* is in some way inscribed, pinpointed in the always evident and singular present punctuality in the form of the signature. Such is the enigmatic originality of every paraph. In order for the tethering to source to occur, what must be retained is the absolute singularity of a signature-event and a signature-form: the pure reproducibility of a pure event.[74]

Taking exception to SEC, Searle - claiming to defend Austin - argued that writing does not *imply* the actual or empirical non-presence of a reader, a receiver, though it may facilitate such non-presence:

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[74] Ibid. p20

> Writing makes it possible to communicate with an absent receiver, but it is not necessary for the receiver to be absent. Written communication can exist in the presence of the receiver, as for example, when I compose a shopping list for myself. [75]

In Derrida's analysis the distance ('spacing', *différance*) between sender and receiver maybe as 'infra-thin' (Duchamp's *inframince*) as to collect under the rubric of a single individual, but it is no less material for that infra-thinness. *Différance*, constituted through absence, is a structural necessity. Searle, who splits the roles of sender and receiver at a physical level (i.e. they are separate entities) does not recognize the possibility that the split can be internal. The sender is absent to himself, regardless of the role he might also adopt as receiver. In 'Ltd Inc a b c…', Derrida demonstrates that absence is a structural *necessity*:

> the absence of my-being present-now, even if this absence is the simple absence of memory… no matter how fine this point may be, it is like the *stigme* of every mark, already split. The sender of the shopping list is not the same as the receiver, even if they have the same name and are endowed with the identity of a single ego.[76]

Like the Phaedrean scroll, like Theuth's invention, Searle's shopping list functions as an *aide-memoire* which interrupts presence. The scope of the written model here - a shopping list - is hedged, at Searle's instigation, in functionality, as if its prosaicness can distance it sufficiently from the additional complications introduced by 'creative' authorship. In fact, (any) text acquires density through abbreviation, abridgement and concentration, conspiring everywhere to reduce itself to *aide-memoire* and present as an object-form, if only to thereby offer itself as potential for material recombination and

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75 Searle, op. cit. p200

76 Derrida, 'Limited Inc a b c…', op. cit. p49

citation: this is a significant function of 'signature' as a point of convenience. It is as fundamental to understand the prosaic level at which text potentiates most effectively as material as it is to understand the 'infra-thin' spacing that divides sender from receiver.

Searle accuses Derrida of confusing 'iterability' with 'permanence', presupposing that writing fixes intent rather like a photograph is seen to fix time. The notional 'permanence' of writing, coupled with assumptions based on the apparent integrity of the physical body, is what allows Searle to assume he can legitimately recover Austin's intent from *How To Do Things With Words* and rescue it from Derrida's misprision. Searle's idea of permanence matches Austin's notion of a conclusive tethering to source, and gives on to similar notions concerning origin, presence, source, substance and singularity. For Derrida, *relative* permanence (the appearance of permanence) is not a process of monumentalizing, but the technical construction of 'a sort of machine which is productive in turn', perpetually in motion:

> A written sign, in the current meaning of this word, is a mark that subsists, one that does not exhaust itself in the moment of its inscription and which can give rise to an iteration in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it.[77]

Bringing the legend of Theuth and Thaumus from 'Plato's Pharmacy' to bear on this passage, the authoritarian suspicion of writing is inscribed as a fear of an emanicipatory impurity, the fear of a collectively determined and unstable subject. Readability as iterability is not the recovery of authorial intent. Every reading alters and aggregates what is read in a never-ending, destabilising process. 'Iterability', (a Derridean neologism

[77] Derrida, SEC, op. cit. p9

which invites the Sanskrit root *itara* - meaning 'other' - into partnership with the Latin root *iter*- meaning 'again'), is 'the logic that ties repetition to alterity'.

So, in SEC, Derrida uses the handwritten signature to clarify the operation of iterability. When he begins a specific consideration of (written) signatures, he focuses on the capacity of signature (as enigmatic paraph) to assure Austin's source because Austin treats handwritten signatures as honorable proxies for presence. Derrida alleges that Austin's signature purports to be wholly unrepeatable and unique, sealing the full and 'conscious presence of speakers or receivers participating in the accomplishment of a performative, their conscious and intentional presence in the totality of the operation'.[78] Signature derives its power to represent transcendental presentness through the 'unique' manual expression of a material connection to an absolutely singular corporeal entity. This is what seduces Searle and underscores his failure to recognise the structural necessity of absence in the speech act. However:

> Effects of signature are the most common thing in the world. But the condition of possibility of those effects is simultaneously, once again, the condition of their impossibility, of the impossibility of their rigourous purity. In order to function, signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitiable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production. It is its sameness which, by corrupting its identity and singularity, divides its seal.[79]

The handwritten signature, an inked original on cheques, affidavits, warrants, personal letters, can only be read as a 'divided seal'; it can only be verified as 'true' in relation to

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78 Ibid. p14

79 Ibid. p20

its other iterations and samples, those already effected and those to come – it begs the possibility of being re-signed. A wholly unrepeatable signature, a rigorously pure, unique signature, is an impossible, unreadable signature, a mark exhausted at the moment of inscription, unable to function. It would be an 'event'. This has obvious and particular relevance for visual artworks, their relationship to manual expression and the presumption of unrepeatability.

2.1.4 SPECTERS OF MARX

It is not too far-fetched to say that Derrida's early work on signatures, including SEC, anticipates his later work on spectres, and that signatures appear to work (and restitute presence) by way of spectral logic. [80] *Specters of Marx* represents Derrida's engagement with the future(s) of Marxism and develops his understanding of spectral operations in relation to it. He formulates the concept of 'hauntology' to describe the spectral (ideological) operations of capital and its serial (re)incarnations. [81] The fascination he has with signatures is a fascination with specters which appear through the materiality of language. A specific consideration of 'hauntology' in the context of *Specters of Marx* and its 'staging for the end of history' is beyond the remit of this thesis, nonetheless, the

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[80] In 'Marx's Purloined Letter', Frederic Jameson specifically links *Specters of Marx* to interviews Derrida conducted in 1972 in *Positions*); see Sprinker, M. (ed) *Ghostly Demarcations: A symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx* (London: Verso, 1999) pp26-67

[81] Derrida, J. *Specters of Marx* (New York & London: Routledge Classics, Routledge, 2006)

complex action of the *revenant* (the returning) is a relevant reiteration and extension of Derrida's construction of signatures.

The spectre is a paradoxical incarnation, a 'becoming-body', which is generated communally. It shares a temporal liminality with signature which is consequent to its relationship with the present: the spectre is a becoming-body because it is a *revenant*, a returning, a ghost. *Revenant* might be understood as the principle of deferral and *différance* in hauntology - 'it begins by coming back'.[82] This, in a sense, is like the operation of signature, which, having promised itself in similitude, can also be said to begin in the promise to come back, to be re-signed, (in ordinary language, 'resignation' marks the act of quitting, concluding service). As the signature commingles the singular and the same (the split repetition of itself), the spectre (the ghost) asks questions of the 'event' (which it haunts):

> Repetition *and* first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as a question of the ghost…Repetition *and* first time but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time* also makes of it also a *last time*. [83]

Différance, the disruptive movement of repetition along the seams of the 'simultaneous', introduces the principle and possibility of hetereogenity, of countersignature and disturbing facsimile apparition. As in 'Ltd Inc. a b c…', 'Otobiographies' and 'Countersignature', (these two essays are considered below), the issue of inheritance arrives for Derrida along such seams, and with it, the ethics of choice (implicated in the political act of reading):

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82 Ibid. p11

83 Ibid. p10

> An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can only exist in the injunction to reaffirm by choosing, 'One must' means one must filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibilities that inhabit the same injunction. And inhabit it in a contradictory fashion, around a secret. If the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. We would be affected by it as by a cause – natural or genetic.[84]

Opening *Specters of Marx* with a passage from Hamlet, which sees the titular character utter 'this time is out of joint' following an encounter with the ghost of his father, Derrida considers the implications of Marx's use of the word 'specter' [sic], which he notes is the first noun of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Marx's spectre, he suggests, functions as an *exordium*, a preface.[85] Derrida observes that in analyzing the becoming-fetish of the commodity, Marx invokes metaphorical spectres, in particular the 'too familiar' apparition of the table. Derrida's implication is that the commodity of *Capital* behaves like the ideology of *The Communist Manifesto*, like a spectre, 'out of joint' in all its relations, never (fully) present. Determined in and by exchange, the commodity is irreducible to use, though the notion of use might be said to haunt it. What Derrida names the 'Table-Thing' is 'ligneous and dematerialized' [sic], 'autonomous and automaton'.[86] As a commodity the table is 'thought' (worked) wood: if wood is an empirical circumstance (material) of the table, it is as an entropy and might be likened to the enigma of the paraph that (misleadingly) presents the signature as a singularity. As the

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84 Ibid. p18
85 Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, op.cit. p2
86 Ibid. p191

Table-Thing, wood promises itself as 'table' and 'table' promises itself as wood. The covering move of the signature presenting itself as an enigmatic paraph (an absolute tethering to source) is reiterated in the covering move (thought) of the commodity which presents itself mystically – Derrida repeatedly refers to the 'enigmatical character' of the commodity. Like the signature that promises it can be re-signed and in that promissory split risks contamination and the possibility of counterfeit, the commodity is split in itself, profiting by exchange (profit results from pollution). The commodity is no more self-sufficient than signature. In this line of reasoning, it might be possible to say the commodity (a variant of the speech act) cites 'labour'.

In his contribution to *Ghostly Demarcations*, a collection of essays written in response to *Specters of Marx*, Werner Hamacher says that for Derrida, the 'messianic' is incorporated as a dimension of the commodity.[87] For Hamacher, it seems as if *Specters of Marx* establishes a conjunction between the appearance of the spectral and the structure of the performative:

> In the spectral, something past, itself provoked by something to come, something outstanding and as yet still in arrears, demands its rights here and now. The spectral is, one might therefore say, that which is most present amongst the things which can be experienced because it appears precisely in the open joint between future and past – or more exactly, where tight connection is out of joint.[88]

Hamacher's description of the spectral could equally describe the signature of SEC. The signature represents a time out of joint, a sender absent to himself: it is not a *general*

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[87] Hamacher, W. 'Lingua Amissa: The Messianism of Commodity-Language and Derrida's *Specters of Marx*', Sprinker, op. cit.

[88] Ibid. p181

maintenance, a conclusive and hermetic intent. Derrida credits Hamacher with understanding hauntology as:

> anything but 'metaphysical' and 'abstract'…the spectral logic I appeal to in *Specters of Marx* and elsewhere, is, in my view, not metaphysical, but 'deconstructive'. This logic is required to account for the processes and effects of, if I may be allowed to put it this way, metaphysicalization, abstraction, idealization, ideologicalization and fetishization.[89]

The close relationship between signature and commodity is perhaps distilled in considerations of how art functions in its markets as a luxury good, an autograph, a conduit to the vested interests of art histories – those that have been and those that are to come.

2.2 SIGNATURE AS PROPERTY

2.2.1 COPYRIGHT

As spectral property, signature inevitably opens onto the issue of 'copyright'. Copyright asserts a claim to legitimacy in descent from the nominal/nominated author/father and seeks to stabilize and monumentalize authorial intent in order to assert economic and moral claims to cultural property. In copyright, signature meets author, artist and 'originator', so the issue of tethering to source is one of legal and economic pragmatism. Any apprehension that the jurisprudential roots of copyright might rely on notions of *ex nihilo* creation and truth is misleading, however appealing these notions might be

[89] Derrida, 'Marx & Sons', ibid. pp244-245

morally.[90] Derrida uses the law of copyright to prove his position on signature. In 'Ltd Inc a b c…', Derrida argues that by marking *Reiterating the Differences* as copyright, Searle is acknowledging the essential impropriety and illegitimacy of his text at a structural level, just as the father he claims in Austin unwittingly admits infelicity to the speech act. If Searle's reply were 'proper', 'true' and 'legitimate' - a truth not a fiction - it would not be necessary or possible to copyright it; if it is not 'true', Searle has no sure base from which to claim a legitimate inheritance from Austin.[91] It might be an obvious, somewhat facetious, point to make, but that does not make it any less relevant. Assured by signature, copyright moves to direct the productive process and potential of writing towards a single (not singular) point of accumulation and control. This suppresses the radical emancipatory potential of iterability. Copyright secures the self-identity of a written text through the univocal figure of the author (a corporate entity rather than an individual) and ownership of the rights to claim that status: signature is a point of convenience under which the complications of authorship and its associated rights can be seen to be resolved.

In the course of framing Searle's copywritten interest in Austin, Derrida enters into a cross-linguistic gameplay with the verbal identity of Searle as 'Sarl' (punning on S.A.R.L. - an acronym derived from Société À Responsabilité Limitée, the designation of

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[90] Deazley, R., Kretschmer, M. & Bentley, L. (eds) *Privilege and Property: Essays in the History of Copyright* (London: Open Book Publishers, 2010)

[91] 'property, n.'. OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152674?rskey=HEab9I&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed 27th July, 2013). 'Property', with its literal form rooted in the 10th century Anglo-Norman and Old French word *propre*, is bound up in the notions of what is 'proper', what is private, peculiar, personal, appropriate, suitable, characteristic.

a limited liability company in France). Indicating/indicting Searle as 'Sarl', Derrida explicitly draws attention to Searle's debt to 'H. Dreyfus' and 'D.Searle', who are acknowledged in the preface to *Reiterating the Differences*. 'Sarl' represents the debt to a *société plus ou moins anonyme* of '3 + n' authors in the fabric of a text which is presented as the claim of one author (e.g. John R. Searle). Derrida's formulation, '3 + n', includes Searle's acknowledgements and also those who figure indirectly in the 'body' of the text, (e.g. Austin). Satirically, 'Sarl' marks the corporate traits of signature, of sending/receiving/collecting under copyright, and the irreducible polysemy of authorship all at once. Derrida uses copyright to prove the deconstructionist position and moves the question of how authorship is asserted into ethical-political regions. He does not posit plurivocity as a panacea for the ills of accumulation under a singular name, rather, he is moved to show that plurivocity is the *sine qua non* of authorship, and that the 'tether to source' is really a 'point of collection', (or, to recall Boltanski & Chiapello in this context, a 'point of accumulation').

Inasmuch, authorship is an abyssal operation, its condition is like that of the *mise-en-âbyme* or fractal, a perpetually moving corporate field. Signature, which collects and indicates the author as a field of unity under the rubric of a verifiable proper name, attempts to direct and focus the movement of the abyss. In providing a sticking point for authorship - something that looks like stasis - signature can accelerate or otherwise vary the speed of accumulation, but it does not delimit what or who an author is. Signature is a leveller between all sorts of texts, a lowest common denominator.

2.2.2 ANTI-AUTHORIALISM

Introducing *Privilege and Property: Essays in the History of Copyright,* Deazley, Kretschmer & Bentley note the importance of Foucault's essay 'What is an Author?' (and the importance of poststructuralism in general) for renewing interest in issues connected with authorship and ownership of cultural products, which they say had been dormant since the 19th century.[92] It is clear to see the corporate traits of signature operating in the character of these debates around Continental 'anti-authorialism' in the 1970s. A shared nexus of references, inheritances, associations and oppositions gathers mass at this time, so when Derrida opens SEC with a discussion of the work of Condillac, he cites his earlier interest in Condillac (in *Of Grammatology*) as well as alluding to Foucault's use of Condillac in 'The Order of Things'. A similar, palpable sense of indirect dialogue between Foucault and Derrida occurs in 'What is an Author?' when Foucault (under the cover of Samuel Beckett) mentions a contemporary *écriture* which 'effaces' and 'murders' the author, (in other words, murders his notion of a Derridean and/or Barthian *écriture*) and Searle's *Essay in the Philosophy of Language* is specifically marked as a point of reference for him. The essays by Searle and Foucault were both published before SEC, though Antonio Campillo believes that 'What is an Author?' would have been impossible for Foucault to conceive without Derrida's earlier work.[93]

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[92] Kretschmer, M., Bentley, L. & Deazley, R. 'Introduction. The History of Copyright History: Notes From an Emerging Discipline'. Deazley et al., op. cit. pp1-20

[93] Campillo, A. 'Foucault and Derrida: the history of a debate on history', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* Vol.5, No.2, (August 2000) pp113-135

It is not surprising, given the capital investment made by Foucault on behalf of Searle, to see the latter use Foucault to disparage Derrida following their argument over Austin. In an interview given to 'Reason', Searle (re)quotes himself:

> With Derrida, you can hardly misread him, because he is so obscure. Every time you say, 'He says so and so', he always says 'You misunderstood me'. But if you try to figure out the correct interpretation, that is not so easy. I once said this to Michel Foucault, who was more hostile to Derrida even than I am, and Foucault said that Derrida practiced the method of *obscurantisme terroriste* (terrorism of obscurantism).[94]

None of this is spurious: signature marks the confusion and exploitation of personal, institutional and textual interplay, permitting the vesting of interests and the acquisition of cultural density. Derrida's conception of signature, then, developed in the context of the anti-authorialism debates in the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, as well as considering SEC and Searle's related intervention, it is worth briefly looking at the 'classic' texts which were involved it those debates – Foucault's 'What is an Author?' and Roland Barthes' 'The Death of the Author'.[95]

In 'What is an Author?' Foucault employs the figure of Scheherazade in order to mediate the metamorphosis he observes in the 'idea of narrative or writing'. Narrator of the cycle of tales known as the *Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade survived ritual execution by telling

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[94] Postrel, Steven R. & Feser, Edward 'Reality Principles: An Interview with John R Searle', *Reason*, (February 2000) http://reason.com/archives/2000/02/01/reality-principles-an-intervie, (accessed 27th July 2014)

[95] Foucault 'What is an Author?'. Preziosi, op. cit.; Barthes, R. 'The Death of the Author', *Image Music Text* (London: Fontanta, 1977) pp142-148

stories, and Foucault uses this to indicate the vivifying power of narrative. If writing as narrative (as work or *oeuvre*) once guaranteed 'immortality', as *écriture*, it 'transposes the empirical characteristics of the author into a transcendental anonymity' which is 'death'. In *écriture*, the author (an orignating force) is dead, unindividuated, disappeared in favour of exegesis and hermeneutics. Significantly, death is associated with unindividuation. The tension in the opposition staged between immortality and anonymity forces 'forever' and 'never' to converge, so that the 'transcendental presentness' which Derrida perecives presents itself to Foucault in *écriture* as 'transcendental anonymity', (the tether to source is presumed to have broken – it is important to note that Foucault assumes the possibility and past effects of the tether, and that this sets him critically apart from Derrida). In effacing the individual (as a singular, traceable voice) Foucault sees *écriture* shift text into a position of *general maintenance*. Tethering to, and breaking from, 'source' result in the same temporality, it seems.

The property that flows from Foucault's author function (asserted through, and protected by, copyright) realizes 'discourses' as 'objects of appropriation'and 'works'. There are slippery, symbiotic relationships between text, discourse, work and the author-function nesting inside each other. If, at the level of the *episteme*, (the term Foucault used to describe the general, historical conditions in which knowledge develops), a discourse produces the author-function, the author-function also produces (and controls) the discourses which admit it. In doing so, the author-function submits discourse to containment, definition and appropriation. In practical terms for Foucault, as 'a pervasively privileged moment of individualisation', the author-function discriminates,

orders, measures and delimits the boundaries of writing as work. The author-function institutes the difference between the (general) proper name of a 'real person' and the (ascribed) proper name of the author that remains at the contours of those texts it separates, defines and characterizes as 'work' to the exclusion of others (not 'work'):

> a private letter may have a signatory, but it does not have an author; a contract can have an underwriter, but it does not have an author; and, similarly, an anonymous poster attached to a wall may have a writer, but he cannot be an author.[96]

The status of those discourses and texts that are beyond the author-function (yet still marked by signature) is not addressed by Foucault. Liminal, they are remaindered and treated as irrelevant to the operation of the author-function even as Foucault calls for the unfolding of a pervasive anonymity.

Ideally, in a world without the Foucauldian author-function, previously authored fiction and meaning would proliferate freely. Consequently, Foucault does not address the problem of what the author-function means for previously 'unauthored' texts. Marcy L. North writes that:

> Foucault uses a rhetoric of power and sovereignty in describing the author-function that suggests that the text is subject to the author, that the name has been applied to the text or has taken control of the text, and that there is a 'text' beneath the 'author' that has an existence apart from the author…(he) reemphasizes the distinction between texts with authors and those without, consigning those texts without recognizable authors to a category of writings without interpretable production and presentation functions.[97]

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96 Foucault, 'What is an Author?', op. cit. p305

97 North, op. cit. p39

Indeed, in his conception of transdiscursivity, Foucault seems to promote the idea that a supra- or uber- author-function is liberatory. Transdiscursivity flows from individuals recognised as authors who have generated texts that are foundational for the discourse that bears the mark of their name e.g. Marx-ism, Freud(ian)-ism, Foucaul(dian)-ism. The addition of '-ism' is crucial as it abstracts and essentializes a corpus of originary texts in so far as it institutes the hermeneutic spirit that they demand.[98] 'Uber-authors' of this sort, in Derridean terms, exaggerate the corporate action of signature.

For Foucault, the author-function acts retrospectively, following texts in direct connection to the penal regimes that establish it. Individuated authors are liable for transgressive opinions. Authorship is not a (subject) state that precedes creative 'work'. According to Foucault, around the end of the 18th century, the possibility of 'transgression' resulted in an author-function expressing its own possibility. Foucault's position relies on the kind of presence and authority dissembled by Derrida in 'Plato's Pharmacy'. Foucault reads a regal schism in the 'bipolar field' that reserves speech from writing:

> In our culture (and doubtless in many others), discourse was not originally a product, a thing, a kind of goods; it was essentially an act – an act placed in the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane, the licit and illicit, the religious and the blasphemous.

[98] Greek - *ισμα(τ-)*, (Latin -isma) expressed the finished act or thing done:-*ism* consigns to the past. '-ism, suffix'. OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/100006?isAdvanced=false&result=2&rskey=VnRHlI& (accessed 27th July, 2013)

> Historically, it was a gesture fraught with risks before becoming goods caught up in a circuit of ownership.[99]

For Derrida, discourse always reveals the impossiblity of a purity in the bipolar field in which the sacred counters the profane; the licit counters the illicit. For Derrida, in this field, act and product are twinned not separated.

Foucault goes on to say that the author-function varies historically in relation to the locus of 'truth' - between, for example, scientific and non-scientific texts.

> There was a time when the texts we today call 'literary' (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated and valorized, without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity. Texts, however, that we now call 'scientific' (dealing with cosmology and the heavens, medicine or illnesses, natural sciences or geography) were only considered truthful in the Middle Ages if the name of the author was indicated.[100]

Here Foucault admits that something like the author-function existed in the Middle Ages, pre-dating the Enlightenment regimes of punishment through which he figures 'modern' authorship developing. Though he varies the author-function historically, he does not explicitly vary the temporality that accompanies that function. Having accused *écriture* of transposing the empirical characteristics of the author into a transcendental anonymity, by the end of the essay, Foucault paradoxically calls for a 'free' present of anonymous proliferation, circulation, manipulation, composition, decomposition and recomposition in 'fiction'. Notwithstanding the problems of classifying and recognizing 'fiction'

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99 Foucault, 'What is an Author?', op. cit. p326

100 Ibid.

without the author-function, and its immanent equivalence with all previously unauthored non-fictive texts, it seems that Foucault envisages a (controllable) simultaneity of work and origin. If the author cannot precede the work, nor follow it as ideological control, the only place for authoring is the present - supra-authorially - the *general maintenance*.

'The Death of the Author' was published by Barthes in 1967, so chronologically it prefigures both 'What is an Author?' and SEC. It is Barthes who takes the most directly economic view of what authorship does, remarking that in its positivism, in discovering the 'prestige of the individual', the figure of the author marks the 'epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology'. For Barthes, the author channels the unrepeatable exceptionality of the individual and the value of interior life towards capital accumulation. The author is nothing less than the collectivizing restatement of authenticating presence in the face of *écriture*. In literature, art and music, the author results when an individual is understood to be simultaneous with the work they have authored, so the genesis of that work is sought in the circumstances of the life from which it has emanated *post facto*. For Barthes, as for Foucault – who refers to the author's life as 'empirical characteristics' - the author is a status applied retrospectively. As with Foucault's author-function, Barthes' author cannot precede the work. There is no simple, stable creative condition emanating from the person of an individual (or quasi-individual authoring entity) to be recovered.

Barthes says 'writing is the destruction of every voice, every point of origin. It is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all

identity is lost.'[101] 'In ethnographic societies', narratives are performed without the performer asserting genius – genius in this instance is any indelible claim to, or permanent effect on, the narrative code, (there are some similarities with the notion of the transdiscursive author). Barthes argues that the instance of writing does not require the author's 'person'. In the light of this, Barthes replaces the author with the 'modern scriptor', a function that is seen to be simultaneous with the text, (again altering a temporal connection that conceives of the author 'as the past of his own book'). The 'modern scriptor' is the reader who, in the act of reading, writes and inhabits the space of the sign by translating and interpreting. In such a textual space, to seek to authoritatively recover or fix intent is to limit and call a halt to writing, to attempt to monumentalise and make permanent.

In this respect, the author (genius) stands opposed to the modern scriptor/reader. Barthes does not deny the textual space unity, but finds that unity in destination, in the scriptor 'who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted'. The text no longer records with reference to a life lived, it deploys, reforms, extends and performs in the present without (any) origin. For Barthes (as for Derrida) writing is wayward, the principle of uncertainty and constant motion: a shopping list, a private letter, a contract, a treatise are all equivalently written, equivalently signed. Though Barthes does not explicate it in these terms, the figure of the author is asserted through a capitalist ideology designed to control the wantonly proliferating signature, which does not - cannot - conclusively separate and seal texts apart from general

[101] Ibid. p142

discourse. Signature cannot definitively order texts in an epistemological hierarchy, even when it is the instrument used to assert claims to property in them. Despite not wholly subscribing to Barthes's dismissal of the anteriority of the author, Derrida's conception of countersignature shares features with the action of Barthes' scriptor. In *Copy Signature Archive*, Derrida explains signature with reference to the *punctum* and he uses the term *stigme* in 'Ltd Inc a b c...' to describe 'the absence of my being-present', directly borrowing from Barthes photographic theory.[102] For Derrida, photography has conceptual connections with the signatory process and this connection between Derrida and Barthes remains to be explored.

2.2.4 ANONYMITY AND PRINT

Anonymity is instrumental for both Foucault and Barthes. Writing about the status of anonymity in the Renaissance, North accuses both of styling it as a 'primordiality' out of which the author arose and evolved. For instance, the author-function that permits Foucault to imagine a society without it is historically contingent on the emergence of a creative individuality co-extensive with the Renaissance and Enlightenment eras. North contends that the Foucauldian author-function is pitched against Medieval anonymity. Her study offers the grounds for reassessing literary theories that simplistically counterpose undifferentiated, anonymous texts against Modern notions of individuated

[102] Derrida, 'Ltd Inc a b c…', *Limited Inc*, op.cit. p109; Barthes, R. *Camera Lucida,* (London: Vintage, 2000)

authorship, (which is deemed to coincide with the advent of mechanistic printing). Analysing historical examples, North demonstrates that anonymity, far from existing as a 'primordial' state from which the author historically emerged, has been a complex, volitional and varied material circumstance for the generation and mediation of texts *within* print culture, (anonymity did not 'die' with the evolution of print). North opens conduits between the clearly demarcated, historically configured author*ing*-functions – the post-Enlightenment individual and the pre-Renaissance 'folk' voice – and resists a binary view of 'Modern' and 'Medieval':

> The anonymity that the print industry disseminated sometimes took the form of a missing author's name, but not always. Pseudonyms, ambiguous initials, and the names of institutions or sponsoring groups gave anonymity a textuality that allowed it to compete with the author's name for popularity and marketability. Sometimes the texts were the products of communal authorship, in which case no particular name was 'missing'. Certain conventions of anonymity left visible spaces in the texts where an author's name could have been placed, while others created a kind of figurative space made legible by the reader's expectations. Anonymity's many variations in early modern books and manuscripts speak to its popularity and usefulness and also to the fact that it formed a coherent enough set of conventions to allow authors and book producers to borrow, compare, conflate, and make surprisingly fine distinctions among its forms and potential meanings.[103]

North constitutes anonymity at the level of choice, making the rigid boundaries of the author malleable – it is not 'imposed', and it does not 'remainder' texts. Importantly, North's work shows that anonymity is not necessarily unsigned, and does not indicate the

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[103] North, op.cit. p3

absence of authoring. Nor does signature necessarily relate to the establishment of market presence.

Of the many fascinating examples North gives, perhaps the following is illustrative of how ragged the authorial boundaries can be:

> The popular sixteenth century *Mirror for Magistrates*, begun as a continuation of Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes*, gathers together poems about recent English worthies and their falls from fortune. The *Mirror* is a collaborative compliation with a named compiler but several anonymous contributers…With each new edition, new stories and prose links are added and the attributions to the older stories change and shift…Before the first tale has been told a reader has seen references to more than a dozen significant sources of authority…The seven unnamed authors are distinguished from each other by cues within the prose links.[104]

Texts like the *Mirror for Magistrates* credit and allude to named and unnamed authors from within the text; others encode clues to authorial identity in anagrams and acrostics. Anonymity varies in visibility and interpretability, it varies in temporality and is not a 'fixed' state. Neither is it necessarily indexed to oral culture - fame is as much a consequence of oral narration as it is of written texts which circulate in print. So, despite valuing Foucault and Barthes for opening the way to her analysis, North's detailed examination of Medieval and Renaissance texts leads her to conclude that both theorists marginalize and over-simplify anonymity. She 'out-histories' Foucault in particular.

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[104] Ibid. pp17-18

For North, the signature shares a degree of 'textual instability' with anonymity: like anonymity, signature develops and proliferates within the boundaries of the text (the 'work') and shares materiality with it.[105] The structural sympathy between anonymity, over-abundance and the impossible tether represented by signature, mean that Derrida never empties out the (authoring) subject to the degree that Foucault and Barthes do, because he never valorizes or clearly demarcates the subject to the same extent. Derrida does not accord the subject 'authority' or repleteness. In terms of property, the signature is never 'proper', it is always contingent, always asserted and claimed. The 'violence' of signature in constituting property is the assertion of a colonial claim. At the same time, signature does not establish 'stable' property, it always includes the threat to break property open and reconstitute it elsewhere, in other forms, including those which are structurally anonymous.

2.2.5 OTOBIOGRAPHIES

Derrida does not empty out the subject in order to bound work, nor does he accord it permanent stability and impenetrable wholeness. This means the status of biography and autobiography has a significant place in his theorizing and in what it means to write and be written. For Derrida, it is impossible to assume a position, protected by the boundary of a discipline or institution, that is not polluted by those 'empirical accidents' that

[105] Ibid. p21-24

characterize a life and work - what Robert Smith calls 'blots of specificity'.[106] The personal nature of the interplay between Derrida and many of his sparring partners - Searle and Foucault amongst them - reiterates some of the theoretical issues at stake in debates about authorship, textual hygiene and the phenomenological subject. In general, Derrida resists the notion that philosophy, (indeed, any epistemological 'discipline'), can be purged of 'blots of specificity'. In fact, signature has a decisive role in drawing attention to them. The character of the jockeying between Derrida and Searle in the circumstances of the constitution, translation and reception of SEC is illustrative of the intrusions that the infinitely particular and personal signature makes into the process of authoring. To reiterate, signature is very much the lowest common denominator in the sum of what an author is. At the same time, signature marks the colonial impetus of those heirs that claim 'legitimacy', so to some extent the intercontinental debate between Searle and Derrida reveals the operational lines of inheritance that are channelled through signature and constitute a 'claim' to property.

Derrida's study, 'Otobiographies', deals with the mutual intrusions of autobiography and philosophy into a written life through the figure of Nietzsche and his 'tainted' legacy. His central contention is that having lived to extend credit to his name, Nietzsche makes of his life an 'immense bio-graphical paraph', dated in advance of the eternal return (which he has to have faith in). The impossibility of determining a defining 'auto-biographical' event problematizes the beginnings, origins or 'the first movement of a signature'.

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[106] Smith, R. *Derrida and Autobiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Purifying rites of separation between the philosopher and the personal life lived deny the necessary impropriety of the text (interior and exterior are mixed):

> Neither immanent readings of philosophical systems (whether such readings be structural or not) nor external, empirical-genetic readings have ever themselves questioned the *dynamis* of that borderline between the "work" and the "life", the system and the subject of the system. This borderline - I call it *dynamis* because of its force, its power as well as its virtual and mobile potency - is neither active nor passive, neither outside nor inside. It is most especially not a thin line, an invisible or indivisible trait lying between the enclosure of philosophemes, on the one hand, and the life of an author already identifiable behind the name, on the other. This divisible borderline traverses two "bodies", the corpus and the body, in accordance with laws we are only beginning to catch sight of.[107]

When 'work' and 'life' are mixed, empirical 'death' does not bring and end to 'life', which is entrusted to countersignatures. Throughout his work, Derrida figures the *dynamis* in various forms: it is citationality and 'parasites' in SEC, and the principle of 'sponginess' in *Signsponge*. As *dynamis*, signature is not split - sender to receiver - into stable, definable parts, rather the split permits the action of substition, equivalence and countersignature.

The issue of tainted legacies, the circles of credit and debt incurred in friendship and in reading, later recurred personally for Derrida in relation to his mentor, Paul de Man and again illustrate the impossibility of textual hygiene. In his prologue to *Death and Return*

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[107] Derrida, J. 'Otobiographies' in Mcdonald, Christine (ed.) *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985) pp5-6

of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, Séan Burke interprets the shadows cast on literary theory by the posthumous revelation of de Man's wartime involvement with *Le Soir*, a collaborationist Belgian newspaper. As de Man's articles surfaced, revisions of his critical position on 'biography' followed:

> De Man's denial of biography, his ideas of autobiography as self-defacement, have come to be seen not as disinterested theoretical statements, but as sinister and meticulous acts of self-protection, by which he sought to (a)void his historical self.[108]

Burke says these revisions of de Man 'disinter many of the loci of traditional author-centred criticism'. They posed ethical-political questions not only of de Man himself, but of his interest in de-centering the individual author and of those who had invested in his theory. Association with 'Paul de Man' demonstrates a potential route to 'prosecution' for these corporate investors ('Sarl') just as, for Burke, the personal apologias issued on de Man's behalf by his friends; 'confirm(s) that…the signature 'Paul de Man' is something greatly in excess of a textual effect…his signature ties de Man ethically and existentially to the texts he has written.'[109] When a legacy is claimed, when proprietorial rights are assumed, the signature automatically implicates anyone using it to claim that legacy and those rights. The author-function, with its system of institutional hedges - for example, an apparently cleansing objectivity which debars some discourses from status as 'work' - does not. As a proprietorial claim, signature is never fully constituted; it is intangible, unstable, liable to devaluation, speculation and market fluctuations.

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[108] Burke, op. cit. p2

[109] Derrida, 'Otobiographies', op.cit. p5

The structural instability on which signature proceeds means that the process of reading and approving - 'countersigning' - is never closed or fixed. As a recovery of intention, reading makes (more or less) speculative claims only. In ordinary language, countersignatures have legal status as the provision of a second signature in verification of a first, or as witness to the authenticity of a document. Frequently, a countersignature enacts a financial instrument – for example, it may be used to confirm the identity of an account holder on which a cheque is drawn, and it can provide a link to the identity of an (otherwise unspecified) bearer who draws on it. The language of financial operations - credit, debt - is especially noticeable in Derrida's construction of signature in 'Otobiographies'.

In terms of its approach and central concern with legacies, with the ethical issues that the extension of a signature entails, 'Otobiographies' bears a purposive relationship to *Specters of Marx*. To read a text in iteration is not *only* to become caught in the eternal return of the proper name, but to make a 'political intervention', the character of which cannot be conclusively decided in advance:

> There can always be a Hegelianism of the left and a Hegelianism of the right, a Heideggerianism of the left and a Heideggerianism of the right, a Nietzscheanism of the right and a Nietzscheanism of the left, and even, let us not overlook it, a Marxism of the right and a Marxism of the left. The one can always be the other, the double of the other.[110]

Politics and ethics cannot be written, they can only be read, and to read is to hybridize. Derrida does not deny the role of intent, but asks his readers to recognize that intent is

[110] Ibid. p32

itself a hybrid produced in and by the abyss (the *mise-en-abyme*). Even as Nietzsche writes 'with his name and in his name', he extends a line of credit to that name which can only be honored after his *literal* demise, by others, who read him politically. The signature is extended - and in this extension from 'the body' (something Derrida figures in *Signsponge* as 'dehiscence') there is something like the movement of an exteriorizing prosthesis. In order to be fulfilled by others in pursuit: 'It is the eternal return that signs or seals'.[111]

2.2.6 COUNTERSIGNATURE

The incomplete subject is manifest in the emphasis Derrida places on 'countersignature'. Countersignature is not a term used in SEC, though it is used in 'Ltd Inc a b c…' when Derrida purports to countersign Searle's name in the face of Searle's attempts to execute his own countersignature as a warrant over Austin. A paper called 'Countersignature' was delivered at a symposium in Cerisy and Derrida was motivated by this locus to stress the affective contextual links that bind personal and 'professional' experiences inextricably together.[112] In 'Countersignature', Derrida reconsiders his relationships with Jean Genet and Francis Ponge in terms of the countersignature, reflecting, from a position towards the end of his life, that the word *contre* has always been central to his

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111 Ibid. p13

112 'Poétiques de Jean Genet: La Traversée des Gens' at Cerisy in 2000. Published: Derrida, J. 'Countersignature', *Genet*, Special Issue, *Paragraph,* Vol. 27, Issue 2 (2004), pp7-42

philosophical enterprise, exemplifying his thinking. *Contre*, variously 'against' and 'beside', conveys the notions of 'opposition' and 'proximity' equally, describing the split, (against and beside), on which the necessary non-presence of the signer in SEC is constituted; *contre* gives on to the *vis-à-vis* as it gives on to the 'beside'.

'Countersignature' opens with a consideration of three modalities of meaning encapsulated in the phrase 'the betrayal of truth'. First, 'truth' might be betrayed by a lie, an infidelity, a simulacrum; second, 'truth' might be equated to betrayal - 'truth' is what betrays; third, 'truth' might be betrayed in the sense of being revealed, or unmasked, in, for instance, a fiction that does not hold itself out to be true. So:

> Supposing that a countersignature betrays the truth of an earlier signature, in what sense does it do this? If the betrayal of truth in its three meanings counterfeits and contravenes by means of a counterfeiting that can, in certain singular cases make the truth ("Veritatem facere", as Augustine says), it can be said that the countersignature betrays the signature by counterfeiting it or, on the contrary, respects it by not imitating it, by not counterfeiting it, for example by signing very differently, The question becomes: what does it mean to countersign and counterfeit? And, especially, what does it mean to betray?[113]

If it is not stated outright in SEC that signature cannot be conceived of as anything other than countersignature, a necessary consequence of the split - the fractured absence to self which is written and is writing - it is made explicit in *Signsponge* and 'Countersignature'. Every signature is a countersignature and cannot be otherwise. In effect, in a complex, spongy intermeshing of tense and citationality, signature - noun behaving as verb -

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[113] Ibid. p8

promises it can be resigned in future, having been signed previously and presently. At a functional level, this gives onto the process of verification, whether that is styled as the attempted recovery of a subject or of a body: signature and countersignature, *vis-à-vis* and beside each other, are performative values, affected by an 'immediate iterability':

> When it's a question of the indelible, irreducible anteriority of the signature, the protosignature in relation to the countersignature, authorized or authorizing, things, immediately get complicated and is contaminated precisely by the betrayal of truth… Iterability haunts the proto-archi signature and is from the outset its own countersignature…all future countersignatures come to countersign what was originally a countersignature.[114]

Signature/countersignature is an abyssal thing, constantly affirming and performing, the proximate *contre* abutting the oppositional *contre*, a contamination and contagion. The act of reading is truly an act of countersigning and as such is an affirmation affected by:

> …a certain passive receptivity in the decision as decision of the other. It is thus not merely performative. If the experience of reading a work as such has always been for me an affirmation of countersignature, that is, of authentication and repetition without imitation, without counterfeiting, a doubling of 'yes' in the irreplaceable idiom of each 'yes', as at a wedding where each 'yes' says 'yes' to the other, doubling it without repeating it…well the formulation of what may here resemble a theory or working out of a theory or reading-rewriting is linked for me to the tangling together of the different Cerisy conferences and my texts on Genet, then Ponge and Genet…I wrote *Signsponge* for Cerisy, in it I elaborated a sort of formalized discourse – that had been a long time in the making, dating back as far as texts such as *Signature Event Context*, where, at the end of *Margins of Philosophy* I play with the imitation by someone else of my own signature

[114] Ibid. p18

– on the experience of countersignature which is to be found in Ponge's text and which finds in that text an extraordinary and exemplary support.[115]

Observed by Derrida, the operation of signature necessarily extends it beyond itself, requiring a validating partner in spite of the face it presents. The breach which permits and demands validation not only permits 'counterfeit', it means counterfeiting is inevitable: without counterfeit/countersignature, there can be no signature. This permits capitalist accumulation around signature as a *corporate* point of convenience as much as it interrupts the omnipotence of individual genius or fixed truth. The emphasis on whether signature is directed towards accumulation or interrruption is an ethical and political choice. Signature has a complex relationship to temporality but it cannot assure transcendental presentness, as is tacitly assumed (by Austin). As signature is *revenant*, what looks like the present is a liminal, haunted state of inbetweenness and a movement of returning or coming back.

[115] Ibid. p25

3. DERRIDA AND VISUAL ART

This Chapter concerns aspects of Derrida's engagement with visual art and expands on them in relation to the 'craft of reproducibility' and the position of the autograph. It develops ideas about the character of the materiality manifest in artists's signatures. Derrida entered the field of visual art at a degree of distance, largely through passages opened up initially in literary criticism. His initial reception in the (English) field came at a time chronologically linked to the inception of the 'Pictures' generation in New York, and to those artists engaged with Feminism, Queer Theory and Post-Colonial discourses who might be thought of as coming within the ambit of Institutional Critique.[116] At this time, Conceptual Art was already well established.

Derrida's approach to visual art departs from consideration of Immanuel Kant's 'parergon'; the claims to the truth in art generated by Heidegger, and the activity of artists involved with Narrative Figuration: Valerio Adami, (whose work illustrated *Glas*), is the focus of '+R (Into the Bargain)' and Gérard Titus-Caramel the focus of 'Cartouches'.[117] Neither Adami nor Titus-Caramel have especially high international profiles. Both '+R (Into the Bargain)' and 'Cartouches' appear in *The Truth in Painting*, a collection of four essays written around 'painting', which was published in French in 1978 (and translated into English nine years later). The back cover of *The Truth in Painting*, carries what is almost a manifesto for Derrida's engagement with art:

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116 'Pictures' refers to a group of artists connected with the gallery, Metro Pictures, New York in the 1980s.

117 Derrida, J. *Glas*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); *The Truth in Painting* op.cit.

> the philosophy that dominates the discourse on painting…/…to decrypt the singular contract which links the phonic trait to the graphic trait…/… to analyze the ductus (idiom of the trait as draftsman's signature) and the system of duction (production, reproduction, reduction, etc.)…/…(to witness)…a duel taking place between Heidegger and Schapiro in order to find out whom, in truth, are due the unlaced shoes of Van Gogh…[118]

Introducing *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts,* Brunette & Wills group together those texts which they determine to represent Derrida's is most direct engagement with art. Alongside *The Truth in Painting*, they mention 'Envois', an essay in *The Postcard*; *Right of Inspection*, 'Forcener Le Subjectile' and *Memoirs of the Blind*, an illustrated catalogue and treatise which accompanied on exhibition Derrida curated at the Louvre in 1990.[119] They introduce Derrida's thought in terms of 'spacing' with reference to *Of Grammatology*, and they remark on his interest in literary signatures in *Glas*.

The material experiments of *Glas*, and the initial theoretical burst of *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology*, are greatly preferred as points of departure for such (sustained) analysis of Derrida as there is in (visual) art. It is as if the profusion of 'creativity' in *Glas* - its difficulty as an academic text - automatically makes it the most appropriate text to consider for art. Consequently, the texts of the SEC cycle are absent or relegated to footnotes. There is, for example, no mention of SEC by name in Wilson's *The Visual World of French Theory: Figurations*, (although she makes an unrelated,

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118 Ibid. (cover)

119 Brunette & Wills, op. cit.; Derrida, J. *The Postcard*, (Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1987); *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1993); 'Forcener Le Subjectile' ('Maddening the Subjectile'), *Yale French Studies*, No. 84, Boundaries: Writing & Drawing (1994), pp154-17; Plissart & Derrida. op. cit.

passing mention of *Margins of Philosophy*, a collection in which the essay appears); nor is there clear reference in Tucker's *Derridada*, (a short study devoted to exploring the connections between Derrida and Duchamp, itself a neglected field for study); and only passing mention in the texts collected together by Brunette & Wills.[120] Similarly, in the field of art history which deals with culture prior to the 20th century and examines either signatures specifically or the notion of authorship more broadly, Barthes and Foucault are quite regularly marked as influences for analysis whereas Derrida is not.[121]

In adopting SEC as a departure point then, this thesis aspires to skew the perspective on Derrida for visual art. Politicized largely as 'institutional critique', which applies 'deconstruction' to the effects of frames and framing through the institution, the structural relevance of some of Derrida's theoretical subtleties - issues of pace and temporality - have been overlooked in visual art. The position from which Derrida was approached by artists and art theorists in the 1970s and 1980s was already invested with ideas about what deconstruction should be from a position already consolidated in literary theory. Harrison & Wood note that consequent to 'French theory in the late 1960s', there was a tendency to perceive all the objects and institutions of art as 'texts' which could be

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120 Wilson, S. *The Visual World of French Theory: Figurations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Tucker, op. cit.; Brunette & Wills, op. cit. See also Richards, K. M. *Derrida Reframed* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008)

121 For example, Christopher Wood, who deals with the effect of signatures and signatory behaviour in German Renaissance prints refers to Barthes but not Derrida; see Wood, C. S. *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art*, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Svetlana Alpers refers to Derrida only to dismay that he doesn't read 'painting' as more than the sum of its parts; Alpers, S. *Rembrandt's Enterprise: the Studio and the Market* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), p117

(wholly) read through the devices of literary criticism.[122] This thesis does not trade on established understandings of what deconstruction is or has been. Rather, its approach is to scroll back from those conceptual points which appear to have been decided in advance in order to rethink the significance of Derrida's work on signature for the production of visual art, not its appearance or reception.

Brunette & Wills do not deal with Derrida's engagement with written signatures in SEC, 'Ltd Inc a b c…' or 'Otobiographies': these are not seen to be key texts for understanding Derrida's relationship to art which, quite conventionally, proceeds through his dealings with images. However, *The Truth in Painting* was first published a year after the translation, reception and reply to SEC in English gave rise to 'Ltd Inc a b c...', and the texts share noticeable *leitmotifs*: the title of Derrida's essay on Adami, '+R (Into the Bargain)', evokes the form of the '(three + n)' authors constituting 'Sarl' in 'Ltd Inc a b c…'; the acronym 'Sarl' is also resurrected in the essay 'Restitutions' to demonstrate the abyssal, corporate process of investment (attribution) in art historical claims to truth. In terms of this thesis, it is productive to place an emphasis on understanding *The Truth in Painting*, (specifically 'Restitutions'), in relation to the SEC cycle, in order to insinuate a path that calls to Derrida's broader encounters with signature. Rather than finding foundation for establishing the place of signature in art in texts that appear *prima facie* to engage with artists and images, I look to signature first as a general practice. Departing from Derrida's SEC cycle offers the potential for generating a new perspective on the

[122] Harrison, C. & Wood, P. *Art in Theory, 1900 – 1990: an anthology of changing ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) p801

relevance of his theories for visual art, especially as they relate to its social (not idiomatic) production.

3.1 SIGNATURE AS EQUIVALENCE

The preceding Chapter finished with consideration of 'Otobiographies' and 'Countersignature', as texts in which Derrida, as Burke puts it, 'disinters the loci of traditional author-centred criticism' and advances the notion that signatures and countersignatures are involved in a never-ending circuit of credit and debt, appealing to the future and 'honouring' the past. Often playing with the imitation of his own signature within the text, Derrida implicates himself practically in this confused and unhygienic operation. He does not treat autobiography, biography, literature or philosophy as disciplines with boundaries, which is partly why those inclined to circumscribe and protect their fields of interest *as professionals* found (and find) him so frustrating. When he redesignates Searle as 'Sarl', Derrida uses his own name to ask whether it is possible to translate a proper name or a signature:

> And how do the 'common', 'generic' elements, which always exist even in a proper name, withstand contamination in and by foreign languages? In order to account for all sorts of necessities that I cannot go into here, I have in other texts, devised countless games, playing with 'my name', with the letters and syllables, *Ja*, *Der*, *Da*. Is my name still 'proper', or my signature, when, in proximity to 'There. J.D.' (pronounced, in French, approximately Der. J. D.), in proximity to 'Wo? Da." in German, to 'Her. J.D.' in

> Danish they begin to function as integral or fragmented entities [*corps*], or as whole segments of common nouns or even of things?[123]

Adjunct to this name play, is Derrida's deliberately inconsistent treatment of names within 'Plato's Pharmacy' - Thamus and Theuth are indicated as 'Ammon'and 'King of Kings'; 'Toth' and 'God of Writing' respectively. Derrida demonstrates in practice the structural instability of even these most proper of proper names.

3.1.1 SIGNSPONGE

The integrity of the proper name, that which signature purports to sign - the assignable commerce (property) between a so-called author and the proper name in general (pursuant to the 'properness' of the subject) - is taken up by Derrida again in *Signsponge*.[124] An important intervention in the chronological narrative of the SEC cycle, *Signsponge* develops ideas about signature, legitimacy, propriety and purity all of which permeate SEC oblique to academic method. It is the acuteness of the angle to academic method in texts like *Signsponge*, essential to Derrida's philosophical engagement, that is styled by Searle as the 'terrorism of the obscurantist'.[125] To an extent, 'Otobiographies' is a less 'obscurantist' reiteration of some of the concerns of *Signsponge*, which is constructed performatively, through the abyssal operations it demonstrates - rhythm and pace are as important to *Signsponge* as words. Its translator, Richard Rand, for whom it is

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123 Derrida, 'Limited Inc a b c….', op. cit. p33
124 Derrida, J. *Signsponge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984)
125 Postrel & Feser, op. cit.

the most 'irruptive essay on literature…since Mallarmé's *La Musique et Les Lettres'*, hints at the impossibility of translating its myriad fugitive anagrams, homonyms and syntax.[126] In effect, *Signsponge* makes the author equivalent with the text in a text that is 'about' a poet who makes his name an equivalence within his poems. *Signsponge* is an important description and demonstration of how Derrida figures signature functioning and coalescing. Understanding it is crucial to developing an appreciation that for Derrida, signature is a process and not a thing.

Derrida is reluctant to divest his method of its 'sponginess' in *Signsponge*, but he does distinguish three modalities of signature. The first is that of signature as authenticating a 'proper name'; the second, of signature as 'the inimitable idiom of a writer, sculptor, painter or orator'; the third is that of signature in general, that which styles and names signature as 'signature'.[127] He contends that Ponge folds all three into one under the rubric of the 'signsponge'. The signsponge is a proper name (exemplified in the name 'Francis Ponge' in *Signsponge* and the name 'Friedrich Nietzsche' in 'Otobiographies'); it is the name of a name, a name redoubled. Placed in quotation marks by Ponge, the name is 'a supplementary mark in the abyss' and 'It is [therefore] in the abyss of the proper that we are going to recognize the impossible name of the abyss.'[128] In Ponge's poems, (prominent amongst those referenced in *Signsponge* are 'Pour un Malherbe', 'Mimosa' and 'Soap'), the relationships between signature, text, proper name and 'thing' are figured by Derrida as fungi and deadwood, spores and cinders, something he marks

126 Derrida, ibid. p*xi*
127 Ibid. p54
128 Ibid. p28

elsewhere as 'dehiscence' (in SEC and 'Limited Inc.') and 'remains' (in *Dissemination*). As spores and cinders, mutually interdependent for necrotizing life, movements between signature-text-name-thing are exponential, inextricable and symbiotic. In both 'Otobiographies' and *Signsponge*, such a temporal convenience as might be described by the movement between signature-text-name-thing, an unfixed entity with a dynamic border, is never deferred to anything but advancing countersignatures: the signature is not autonomous or contained. In this, although Derrida might seem to approach Heidegger's hermeneutic circle in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', and his distrust of the ideological translation of *pharmakon* in the 'Phaedrus' echoes Heidegger's distrust of the translation of *hypokenimenon*, there is a marked difference. Derrida does not subscribe to Heidegger's view of the *hypokenimenon*, but to 'countersignature' and the abyss.

To clarify, the Heideggerean hermeneutic circle involves the artist, the art work and art in a search for the point of origin, 'the thingliness of the thing', which 'is not merely an aggregate of traits, nor an accumulation of properties by which that aggregate arises.'[129] For Heidegger, the thing has a pre-existent core - *hypokenimenon* - or underlying substance; the core 'being' is essentially inarticulable, an awareness that might be described in Freudian terms as *unheimlich*. Heidegger believes that the (insensitive) translation of *hypokenimenon* points to a distant error in the Western construction of 'being':

> The process begins with the appropriation of Greek words by Roman-Latin thought. *Hupokenimenon* [sic] becomes *subiectum*, *hupostasis* becomes *substantia*; *symbebkos* becomes *accidens*. However this translation of Greek names into Latin is by now way the

[129] Ibid. p93

> innocent process it is considered today. Beneath the seemingly literal and thus faithful translation there is concealed, rather, a translation of Greek experience into a different way of thinking. *Roman thought takes over the Greek words without a corresponding, equally original experience of what they say, without the Greek thought*. The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation. [130]

Hypokenimenon is a rather untranslatable state of Greek thought that has been rationalized by Roman thinking in terms of its 'traits', which, related to it, are nevertheless not 'it'. That the thingness of the thing, the '-ness' of anything, is figured as 'rooted'. This contrasts with the Derridean 'dehiscence' of the thing as an 'aggregate of traits'.

The significance of dehiscence as a somewhat marginal metaphor in the SEC cycle pays directly into *Signsponge* and to Derrida's relationship with Heidegger. Dehiscence, mentioned in passing in SEC, is described in more detail by Derrida in 'Limited Inc a b c…':

> As in the realm of botany, from which it draws its metaphorical value, this word marks emphatically that the divided opening in the growth of a plant, is also what, in a positive sense, makes production, reproduction, development possible. Dehiscence (like iterability) limits what makes it possible, while rendering its rigor and purity possible. What is at work here is something like a law of undecidable contamination, which has interested me for some time. [131]

Dehiscence describes the dissemination of seeds and spores in a violent and multifarious burst or puff. It is connected with the action of iteration on utterance and signature where

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130 Ibid.

131 Derrida, 'Limited Inc a b c…', op. cit. p59

iteration is a fractal trigger, and at some level 'quasi-organic'. The fungal movement originates without absolute definition.

The synecdochic, fungal quality Derrida perceives working in and through 'Francis Ponge' (signature-text-name-thing) denies 'things' healthy, practical, discrete lives as much as it denies them a submerged, 'uncanny' existence. *Fungus*, wholly unchanged from Latin, translates to Greek as *sphongos, spongos*, (a sponge), and has, in this history, a relationship with the action of yeast: 'sponge' is the pun, the textual device, that Derrida employs to demonstrate the mycological movements between signature-text-name-thing through Ponge. Furthermore, the Latin *fungibilius*, derived from *fungor* (present infinitive *fungi*) means 'to perform' – this is hardly incidental as a reflection on the Derridean method. In combination these etymological excursions bring sense to Derrida's assertion that 'the relationship between the signature and the proper name is spongy', and signature is fungal.[132] *Signsponge* is an important elaboration of Derridean method.

[132] Derrida, *Signsponge*, op. cit. p100

3.1.2 AGAMBEN

The notion of a synecdochic quality to signature might be seen to bring *Signsponge* close to the notion of signature explored by Giorgio Agamben.[133] *The Signature of All Things* - a self-declared 'reflection on method' - opens with a consideration of Paracelsus's 15th century alchemical treatise *De natura rerum* ('On the Nature of Things'), a treatise codifying the medieval doctrine of signatures, (*signatura*). Agamben argues that the doctrine of signatures had a decisive influence on Renaissance and Baroque thought. When signature is understood to mean 'characteristic', what is generally considered to constitute a signature is shifted beyond the notaristic inheritances of the hand-written paraph to implicate moral and personal indigenous 'truths', (signature has a penumbra of shifting qualities rather than a singular, identifiable, static source). The Medieval doctrine of signatures holds that hidden, esoteric qualities and propensities are marked as signs which allude to these qualities in the physical form of organic things. Signatures are thus diagnosed through signs.

Agamben, writing to demonstrate the limits of semiotic analyses of signature, points to the (provisional) resurrection of the Paracelsian signature in *The Order of Things* and says Foucault locates it in the 16th century episteme which is determined as having been constructed through a theory of resemblance. In *The Order of Things*, 'adjacency' is the organising principle in this episteme, with place and similitude (that which displays the

[133] Agamben, G. *The Signature of All Things: On Method* (New York: Zone Books, 2009)

'hidden' property) in a symbiotic relationship.[134] For Foucault, in this ordering of knowledge, movement is circular as opposed to linear, (it is linear in the 'Classical', 17th century episteme). Signatures visibly (physically) manifest hidden qualities in terms of the sympathies, analogies, emulations and conveniences that flow from hidden qualities, and thus structure the field of resemblances. In this order, signatures have a degree of latency - they exist even if they have not, and have never been, recognized. There are mute signatures waiting to be discovered. Signatures are not constituted through exterior perception, however, but 'organically' from within.

Agamben claims to work in a Foucauldian *Entwicklungsfähigkeit,* tracing the movement of the Paraclesian signature - which makes manifest occult virtues - through the work of the 16th century German mystic, Jackob Böhme. Agamben indicates that the most significant development of the doctrine of signatures occurred not in 'science' (medical or magical), but in the theory of sacraments. This theory, in debt to Augstine's fourth century theory of signs, culminates in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, a work which marks a material difference between sign and sacrament. Sacraments do not only refer symbolically to what is signified (as might the sign), but act to confer a grace. The *sacrament* of marriage is used by Austin (and others) to represent the speech act and that - in turn - opens out in Derrida's consideration of 'notaristic' signatures and their lack of self-sufficiency.[135] If the notion of sacrament seems to pervade the speech act as a

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134 Foucault, M. *The Order of Things* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002)

135 Agamben, G. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991). *Language and Death* deals with the specifically with the speech act, but is beyond the remit of this thesis. *The Signature of All Things* is

metaphysical remnant, that is nothing more than a description of the complicity that the speech act requires. Agamben states that the sacrament's efficacy:

> does not act simply *ex institutione* like a sign; rather each time it needs an active principle in order to animate it. This is why it is necessary for the minister, who represents Christ as the principal agent, to have the intention, (if not presently, at least customarily) of carrying out the sacramental act…Even if such intention is not subjective, which depends on the good or evil dispositions of the minister (*ex opere operantis*), but is an objective reality that is produced *ex opere operatum*, the sign here is always the place of an operation that actualizes its efficacy.
>
> In other words, the sacrament functions not as a sign that, once instituted, always signifies its meaning but as a signature whose effect depends upon a signator, or in any case on a principle – occult virtue in Paraclesus, instrumental virtue in Thomas – which each time animates it and makes it effective.[136]

In Medieval theology, the sacramental effect - the effect of receiving sacraments - marks the human soul with a *character* or *nota*. Agamben states that Augustine held that such a *character* might be marked without conferring sacramental grace it was supposed to. Augustine exemplifies this with reference, firstly, to gold or silver coins which, stamped with a *signum regale* in breach of the appropriate authority, would nonetheless remain valid tender; secondly, with reference to an absconding soldier, marked with the *character militiae*, (given to Roman soldiers entering the Legion), who, forgiven for

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considered in preference to *Language and Death* because it extends the etymology of signature.

[136] Agamben, *The Signature of All Things*, op. cit. pp46-47

absconding, is returned to service without being re-marked with the *character militiae*. Agamben says this demonstrates that:

> the idea of an indelible sacramental character arises, then, from the need to explain how the sacrament survives in conditions that should have made it void or inefficacious. If the communication of the Spirit is impossible, the character will express the excess of sacrament over its effect, something like a supplement of efficacy without any content other than the pure fact of being marked…To put it differently: character is a zero degree signature, which expresses the event of a sign without meaning and grounds – in this event - a pure identity without content.[137]

Historically, the notaristic signature - the kind of signature Derrida considers in SEC - follows the sacramental signature, and the sacramental character bears a relationship to the paraph of the autograph/notaristic signature: the paraph is something less than a signature which must, like 'grace', promise itself again, (it is active). As a supplement of efficacy, the zero degree signature, the indelible sacramental character, is redundant:

> a sign produced by a sign, the character exceeds the relational nature that is proper to the sign……Character, then, is a sign that exceeds the sign, and a relation that exceeds and grounds every relation. In the efficacious sign of the sacrament, character is what marks the irreducible excess of over-signification.[138]

Agamben locates a split in signature in relation to excess and in that, its 'sign' is the locus of redundancy. To some extent, Agamben's work supports Derrida's contention that signature is both a divided seal and a latent countersignature. The fact that Derrida

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137 Ibid. p48

138 Ibid. pp49-50

specifically refers to signature as *parousia*, as he does in 'Restitutions', testifies to the importance of theology in its structural inheritance.

3.2 SIGNATURE AND THE BODY OF THE ARTIST

3.2.1 RESTITUTIONS

'Restitutions' is a title that could be seen to hint at the logic of the politically motivated attributions and corporeal recoveries examined in the text that follows it.[139] Derrida wrote the essay in French in 1978, at approximately the same time as 'Otobiographies'. Like 'Otobiographies', it anticipates the character of issues that would surface with the discovery of de Man's 'collaborationist' papers because it looks at the operation of ideologically motivated recoveries and the hygienic process of distancing. Derrida takes up with the claims to a painting of shoes by Van Gogh which were lodged by Heidegger in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1935) and by Meyer Schapiro in 'The Still Life as a Personal Object: A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh' (1968).[140] It could be said that what is at stake in Derrida's essay it is the determinacy of titles: Schapiro and Derrida employ - or construe - different titles for the (same) painting, whereas Heidegger does employ one at all, merely referring to the artist. Despite this, Schapiro claims to recognise

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139 Derrida, 'Restitutions', op. cit. pp255-382

140 Heidegger, M. *Basic Writings*, (London and New York: Routledge, Routledge Classics, 2011); Schapiro, M. 'The Still Life as a Personal Object: A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh', *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society - Selected Papers* (New York: George Braziller, 1994) pp135-142

a specific painting in Heidegger's text, and he corresponded with Heidegger before publishing 'The Still Life as a Personal Object', as correspondence which led him to illustrate his text with an image of the painting to which he believes Heidegger was referring.

This painting, which bears the name 'Vincent' and the date '1887', is entitled *Shoes* (anomalously dated '1886' in the reproduction by-line). It is acknowledged as belonging to the Vincent Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, where it is listed as *A Pair of Shoes* (1886). Derrida, who finds Schapiro in prosecutory mode, forcing Heidegger's hand, employs the same illustration in 'Restitutions'. He titles it *Old Shoes with Laces* (undated) and follows it with several other image reproductions, which are spaced throughout the text in an effort, it seems, to illustrate 'titles' as much as reproduce the images to which they are attached. None of the (titled) illustrations are referred to in the 'body' of the text, unlike the names of artists to which they may be attributed. Removed from their proper place accrediting individual works of art, the names of artists dispersed within the body of the text constitute another methodological device, a performative element of textual 'practice'. Magritte, Van Eyck, Van Gogh are stockholders in Derrida's enterprise here - his S.A.R.L. - and by virtue of this in the enterprise of Heidegger and Schapiro. A degree of connoisseurship or detective work (policing the text) is required to stitch the names to the reproductions.

On the face of it, Schapiro and Heidegger seem to be divided over the issue of whether the shoes depicted belong to Van Gogh (Schapiro) or to an anonymous (female) peasant (Heidegger). Schapiro introduces his text, as follows:

> In his essay on 'The Origin of the Work of Art', Martin Heidegger interprets a painting by Van Gogh to illustrate the nature of art as a disclosure of truth…he chooses 'a well-known painting by Van Gogh, who painted such shoes several times…[141]

Derrida remarks that Schapiro, intent on identifying exactly which of 'several' paintings is this 'well-known' Van Gogh, skips over the central thesis at work in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' to concentrate on a triviality. It is through a process of academically informed elimination, coupled with personal recollections solicited from Heidegger some 30 years after the fact, that allows Schapiro to settle on the painting that illustrates his text. Henceforth, the illustrative example employed by Schapiro is accepted as the veritable object.[142]

Having identified the exact painting, Schapiro goes on to fault Heidegger's personal theoretical projections into it and thus his conception of 'the metaphysical power' of art, which in Schapiro's opinion, are advanced to the detriment of the originating artist. For Schapiro, the intimate and psychoanalytically important status of shoes on a symbolic level naturally means that Van Gogh painted his own shoes, (simultaneously painting himself), so he works empirically towards this conclusion. In the end, despite his prosecutions, it is not the specific painting that matters to Schapiro, but the specific artist,

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141 Schapiro, op. cit. p135

142 The painting has, consequent to the attention of Heidegger-Schapiro-Derrida, become something of a *cause célébre* and was, in 2009/2010, the focus of an exhibition - *Vincent Van Gogh: Shoes – A Painting as Our Guest* at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne http://www.wallraf.museum/index.php?id=43&L=1, (accessed 27th July 2013)

the specific self-consciousness. Here, Derrida reads a devious science which employs the aperture located in the signature - 'Vincent' - in an attempt to restitute the full presence of the artist 'Vincent Van Gogh'; to pull, in tact, in versimilitude, *that* historical body through the aperture. Under the guise of an empirical prosecution, Derrida suggests, Schapiro slips to metaphysics: 'the whole presence gathered, pulled tight, contracted into itself, with itself, in proximity with itself, a parousia.'[143] It is as if Schapiro pulls the signature-aperture closed and the painting can be said to depict Van Gogh's shoes in an aboslute sense: the spectral body of the artist is a not so much a *djinn* at Schapiro's command, but the apparition of empirical truth beyond human agency.

It appears to Derrida that Schapiro unwittingly betrays a more personal attribution than the supernatural restitution of the artist. According to Derrida, in wishing to restitute the full presence of 'Vincent Van Gogh', the impossible unity of an impossible presence, Schapiro, (who dedicated 'The Still Life as a Personal Object' to his mentor, Kurt Goldstein), wishes to restitute the object vicariously to him. It was Goldstein who introduced Schapiro to Heidegger's text in the first place, hence the dedication. Derrida employs the abyssal, destabilizing operation of the signature to illustrate his contention that Schapiro's acknowledgement of a debt to his mentor precedes (prefaces and frames) an ideological attempt to restitute the place of a persecuted émigré in the face of Teutonic nostalgia, (i.e. Schapiro is not resituting the shoes to Van Gogh). In attempting to restitute 'Vincent' *contra* Heidegger, Schapiro brings Goldstein to haunt the painting. Derrida believes that Schapiro was too keen to abandon the central thesis of Heidegger's work in

[143] Derrida, 'Restitutions', op. cit. p369

order to prosecute him on Goldstein's behalf, and through this prosecution, attempt to bring an political ideology and series of (traumatic) events into focus.

Derrida notices that mention of Van Gogh in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' is nugatory. Methodologically, this is precisely what interests him. Heidegger's reference to Van Gogh is a pinprick, a puncture through which his conception of the work of art is pulled in on itself and caught in a vortex: '…each time, I've seen the celebrated passage on 'a famous picture by Van Gogh' as a moment of pathetic collapse, derisory and symptomatic, significant.'[144] Having imagined a narrative for the shoes that locates them as the shoes of a 'peasant woman', all the more present the less they are thought (of) by that imaginary peasant woman, Heidegger states that 'truth' of the shoes is the revelation in the painting, (by imaging and imagining them in paint), of what is 'not-thought' in them:

> What happens here? What is at work in the work? Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes is in truth. This being emerges into the unconcealment of its Being. The Greeks call this unconcealment of beings *aletheia*. We say 'truth' and think little enough in using this word.[145]

Though Heidegger's reference to Van Gogh is transitory and the painting is presented as an exemplar, (he would have us believe that any other painting would do), Derrida says that the fact that Heidegger choose to indicate 'Van Gogh' means that he fails in his attempt to model the work of art. Heidegger emphasizes the familiarity of the painting, (it is 'famous' and 'well-known'), and the prosaic quality of the 'equipment' it depicts. His

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144 Ibid. p262

145 Heidegger, op. cit. p102

unconscious imputations accept unspoken structures which construct what is 'famous' and they present subjective, ideological truths of being, (which are therefore conjectural). In a sense, Derrida's view of Heidegger's take on the work of art is in sympathy with his view of Searle's take on claims to (Austin's) intellectual legacy: Heidegger and Searle are compromised in similar ways.

3.2.2 HEIDEGGER'S RECIPROCAL READYMADE?

It is perhaps illuminating to consider Heidegger's employment of the unspecified painting by Van Gogh as a (Reciprocal) Readymade. The notes which accompany Duchamp's *Green Box* refer to the Reciprocal Readymade as follows: 'Reciprocal Readymade = Use a Rembrandt as an ironing-board'.[146] Substituting Heidegger's reference to the painting in this formula gives us the following statement: 'Reciprocal Readymade = Use a Van Gogh as *aletheia*.' If a Van Gogh and a Rembrandt are interchangeable to the extent that they each represent a *famous* painting, (i.e. an instantly recognizable physical work of art), the tension between 'ironing board' and '*alethia*' is, with reference to 'The Origin of the Work of Art', a tension between 'equipment' and 'the truth of equipment'. Duchamp's reciprocity involves restyling what is ostensibly an artwork as a functional object for use in conducting a household task: the painting is bound to its physical substrate. Heidegger's reciprocity involves restyling what is

[146] Sanouillet, M. & Peterson, E. (eds). *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) p32

ostensibly an artwork as a functional object for use in modeling a universal or philosophical paradigm: the painting is unbound from its physical substrate. 'Art' – as a space created through disjunction (Duchamp) or revelation (Heidegger) – happens proportionately on different sides of the equation. For Duchamp, it happens largely on the side of the Readymade; for Heidegger, largely on the side of the painting.

Both Duchamp and Heidegger require 'instant recognition' and it is this shared requirement that illustrates signature as a founding principle in their considerations of art. So, the implications of the Reciprocal Readymade for Heidegger's notion of art *vis-à-vis* 'equipment' cannot be divorced from the operation of the signature, which belies the schismatic character and complex temporality of the artwork even in its 'thingly' physical embodiment. Heidegger conceives of equipment as 'half-thing', as objects made without the autonomy of whole, self-sufficient things: artworks which reveal the essence of 'equipmentality' are autonomous to the extent that they reveal the 'truth of being'. The (impossibly) autonomous artwork - indicated by Duchamp as 'a Rembrandt' - is indicated by Heidegger as 'a well-known Van Gogh': the *famous* work of art for both, has the status of an 'equipmental' prop. Expunged of references to Van Gogh, Heidegger's text could not carry the same degree of conviction that a painting - any painting - could embody the transcendental truth of 'equipment', the essence of being.

Although Heidegger would like to think his example is indifferent, and he tries to display his indifference by abandoning 'the one by Van Gogh that represents a pair of peasant shoes' with a preceding qualification - 'a painting, e.g.' - it isn't abandoned and it can't

be generalized. For Derrida, there is no accident, no indifference, in the character of the painting Heidegger chooses to abandon. If Heidegger assumes that the painting he chooses as an example is dispensible, an indifferent model-form, he is sucked through the particularity of the signature-aperture 'Vincent'. In choosing *this* painting to abandon, in describing what is left behind, he annexes Van Gogh's shoes 'on the pretext of repatriating them to their authentic, rural landscape, back to their native place'.[147] Heidegger chooses Van Gogh to share (represent) his artisanal ideology, his Germanic 'unthought'. In choosing to absent himself from *peasant* shoes, what remains for Heidegger (and constitutes 'The Origin of the Work of Art') is an earthy, manual artisan's tradition, (Duchamp, of course, also professes 'indifference').

Derrida reprimands Schapiro for not acknowledging the incongruity and superfluity of 'Van Gogh' in the scheme of 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. Paradoxically, he generates his own reading of Heidegger exactly through this superfluous 'spyhole'. To bring 'Countersignature' into play here:

> …the system of contagion or radiation between the places of the text, the columns and the spyholes [*judas*]. I called 'spyholes', if you recall, the inset sequences of text that are precisely like spyholes, like openings made or pierced in columns to spy and to lie in wait, to see without being seen. Judas is also a traitor's name, the figure of the disciple, the Jew who betrayed Jesus, his master, precisely by kissing him.[148]

What is a spyhole, might be configured from the other side a 'visor effect', (as it is in *Specters of Marx*), a spectral device and operation:

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147 Derrida, 'Restitutions', op. cit. p338

148 Derrida, 'Countersignature', op. cit. p30

> …the spectre is a becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some "thing" that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other. For it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition, but which disappear right away in the apparition, in the very coming of the *revenant* or spectre. There is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as the reapparition of the departed…One does not know if it is living or dead…this Thing that is not a thing, this thing that is invisible between its apparitions, when it reappears. This Thing meanwhile looks at us and sees us not see it even when it is there. A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity. It de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony. We will call this the *visor effect*: we do not see who looks at us…it will be presupposed by everything we advance on the spectre in general…[149]

Derrida, whose debt to Heidegger in this passage is advanced in the capitalization of 'Thing', describes the reference to Van Gogh in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' as 'ridiculous and lamentable', 'both overlooked and impoverished', characterized by a 'consumer-like hurry', 'massive self-assurance' and 'crude framing'. He argues that despite its place on the periphery of his argument, Heidegger's abandonment of Van Gogh is pivotal, (in this, 'Restitutions' shares methodological aspects with 'Plato's Pharmacy'). Heidegger deals in 'ghosts', as does Schapiro. Unconsciously, they both demonstrate the operation of the abyss. The moment that Schapiro seems to oppose Heidegger most radically is the moment he most resembles him. Heidegger's abandonment and Schapiro's prosecution are *faux-pas*, taken in haste: it is possible to see a slip to metaphysics in the pre-linguistics at work in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', as

[149] Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* op. cit. pp5-6

well as in the quasi-empirical *parousia* of 'The Still Life as a Personal Object'. The revelation of the unthought thing and the restitution of individual artist are equivalents in Derrida's abyss. In their respective texts, both Schapiro and Heidegger approach the artwork as a 'commodity' in the sense that both conceive it to be spectrally endowed and activated for use in their critical enterprise.

3.2.3 HEIDEGGER'S HAND: SIGNATURE AS STYLE

One of the figurations Derrida uses in 'Restitutions', a figuration which haunts the shoes, is the notion of the 'pair'. It is pertinent that the title attached to the Van Gogh painting at the centre of the discussion has been museologically fixed as *A Pair of Shoes (1886),* setting some sort of seal on the aesthetic assumptions that have configured them as a pair. Derrida questions both Schapiro and Heidegger over the implication that the shoes painted by Van Gogh are 'paired'. As a pair - 'belonging' (to Goldstein and the German people as much as to Van Gogh, Heidegger, Schapiro or Derrida) - the shoes are made to walk, put to work in on behalf of the (restituted/ing) individual: 'They are attributed to a subject, tied on to that subject by an operation the logico-grammatical equivalent of which is more or less relevant.'[150] Imagined as a mismatched couple, Derrida suggests, the shoes are 'perhaps slightly threatening and slightly diabolical' - neither personal

[150] Derrida, 'Restitutions', op. cit. p264

objects nor useful impersonal equipment on the basis of which the imputations of Schapiro and Heidegger carry.[151]

This concern with paired-ness opens out onto a discussion of *techne* in 'Geslecht II: Heidegger's Hand'.[152] In the context of a discussion about the translation of *geslecht*, via Heidegger's consideration of Friedrich Hölderlin's poem, 'Mnemosyne', and a French language constellation of substitutions and obliques circulating around the words *monstrer* and *montrer*, Derrida draws attention to the relationship of the hand to 'monstrosity'.[153] Hölderin alludes to the people - the *geslecht* - as 'monster', in the singular, and for Derrida, this iterates through Heidegger's figurations of 'the hand', as singular (unpaired). Having studied all the published photographs of Heidegger he could find, Derrida discerns:

> deliberately craftsman-like staging of hand-play, of the monstration and demonstration that is exhibited there, whether it be a matter of the handling [*maintenance*] of the pen, of the maneuver of the cane that shows rather than supports, or of the water bucket near the fountain. The demonstration of hands is as gripping in the accompaniment of the discourse.[154]

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151 Ibid. p265

152 Derrida, J. 'Geslecht II: Heidegger's Hand' in Sallis, J. (ed.) *Deconstruction & Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pp161-196

153 Ibid. p162: *geslecht* gives on to 'sex, race, species, genus, gender, stock, family, generation or genealogy, community' and from there onto nationality and nationalism; *monstrer* is the word *la monstre* made into a verb, and *montrer* is to show, or demonstrate - the latter word derived from the Latin, *monstrum*, which is connected to portents and omens

154 Ibid. p169

A clue to the trajectory of the exposition that follows is suggested by the pointed use of *maintenance* to represent 'handling'. In SEC, Derrida represents the type of 'presentness' assumed to carry in the enigmatic paraph, the (autographic) signature, as *general maintenance*. Breaking into the compound word - *maintenance* (now) - the noun-stem *main* (hand) is prefigured. Derrida views Heidegger as blinded to the 'craftsman-like staging of the hand-play' in his photographic poses, a staging which covertly affiliates him with Thaumus rather than Theuth. This, despite the valorization of the craftsman who might be understood to be operatively 'working', grounds a technologically resistant, inoperative 'authenticity', reliant on rural and manual traditions:

> The meditation on the authentic *Hand-Werk* also has the *sens* of an artisanalist protest against the hand's effacement or debasement in the industrial automation of modern mechanization. This strategy has, one suspects, equivocal effects: it opens up to an archaistic reaction toward the rustic artisan class and denounces business or capital, notions whose associations then are well known. In addition, with the division of labour, what is called "intellectual work" is what implicitly finds itself thus discredited.[155]

The contradictions contained within Heidegger's conception of craft turn on the singularity the hand. The hand, with an 'immense role…more or less directly plays in the whole Heideggerean conceptuality', is a singular 'hand', the essence of which does not unfold in the active function of gripping or grasping.[156]

According to Derrida, the only time that Heidegger remarks on plural hands is in the context of a pair joined together in prayer: united as a singular hand before God. The

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155 Ibid. p172
156 Ibid. p182

behaviour of the (singular) hand - the hand that does not work in concert with a partner - is of the order of the 'gift', and 'touch', but not of 'craft' (where craft is *techne*). Derrida's discernment and reading of this motif in Heidegger establishes the Heideggerean essence of being (and the truth revealed in painting) in *manner* (*maniera)*. The order of 'felt' presence attaches to the singular hand, to *geste*, not to paired hands or *techne*. In visual art, *maniera*, gives on to questions of verifiability, attribution and signature: beyond the obvious appending of a name to an artwork, signature is taken to be embodied in the recognisable 'hand' of the artist. This opens onto an expanded sense of signature as style. It might be tempting to assume that as style, signature has some mysterious extra quality that takes it into a different realm; that there is an element which is unforced, inarticulable and therefore special. From a Derridean perspective, the issues involved in this type of signature are not of a different order to those of the kind of notaristic signature considered in SEC. 'Artistic' style is recognized by the same process of comparison and possibility of re-signing (elsewhere, in other artworks or with recourse to officiating documents, not necessarily 'in future') as is the 'divided seal'.

3.2.4 GESTURE AND CHANCE

In the interview conducted in 1990 with Brunette & Wills, Derrida was invited to revisit Van Gogh and the place of signature in the visual arts.[157] Referring to Van Gogh's impasto, (the technique of applying paint thickly, that is not flat to the surface of the

[157] Brunette & Wills, op. cit.

picture plane), Brunette says he feels the 'presence of the artist's body' in a way that he doesn't with writing, and proceeds to question Derrida as to whether this 'presence' is irrefutable. Derrida answered that such an experience of the 'body' is an experience of frames, of dehiscence. Unlike Schapiro, who wishes to diarise Van Gogh, restituting him as a 'lived' individual with a biography, (the biography precedes and explains the artist as an 'author'), Brunette's apprehension of presence might be seen to open out to a 'dumb' restitution of the general (generic) human body, which traces its particularity, (its non-mechanical, unmediated authenticity), transcendentally in the reassuring irregularity of thickened blots and daubs. In raising the issue of the artist's body in relation to the technique of impasto, Brunette insinuates that the relationship between gesture and viscosity, the way in which material is self-evidently marked and holds its markings bodily, might be idiomatic in painting (in art), to be 'felt' rather than 'read'. As such, painting's idiom incarnates itself as a *medium*, putting itself beyond translation (ultimately beyond *techne*): painting must be apprehended sensually, beyond language. The notion of 'medium' might include both 'subject' and/or 'material' as 'channel', where medium is the union of subject and material. What appears to be put beyond writing is the artist (bolstered by the rhetoric of talent) and the unrepeatable encounter between the artist and material. Here is a slip past history instigated, ironically, through the apprehension of a manipulation and a technique (impasto) that can be historically delimited.

Related to gesture, the fetishization of autographs and their substrates is a recurrent theme in several of Derrida's texts, including 'The Paper Machine', *Copy Signature Archive*, as

well as 'Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand'. In 'The Paper Machine', Derrida considers the obsolescence of paper as a medium, the technologies of inscription, the material archive, the book form and the 'quasi-sacrality' of writing supports and printing methods in the face of democratization. In doing so, he produces a useful oblique to understanding visual art. He observes the tendency to overvalue the 'book-form' according to its imminent obsolescence, the 'fortunately incorrigible fetishism' which will protect it and he notes that, in keeping with his veneration of artisanal ideology, Heidegger deplores the fact that in the typewritten letter 'the singular trace of the signatory is no longer recognizable through the shapes of the letters and the movements of the hand.'[158] The autograph deliqueses in signature, which, after all, does not require 'the hand'.

Admitting a juvenile tendency to fetishize the act of writing - using a quill when he had the 'slightly religious feeling of writing' - Derrida questions the legitimacy of opposing handwriting to mechanical writing. Technological advance doesn't bypass the hand, but as it becomes less immediate, evidence of its trace is displaced and the neurotic scope of the autograph in the history of production, which is a history of belonging and owning as much as a history of devising and realizing, expands in necrotizing fashion:

> Even the computer belonging to the "great writer" or "great thinker" will be fetishized, like Nietzsche's typewriter. No history of technology has wiped out that photograph of Nietzsche's typewriter. On the contrary, it is becoming ever more precious and sublime, protected by a new aura, this time the means of "mechanical reproduction"; and that would not necessarily contradict the theory of mechanical reproduction put forward by

[158] Derrida, *Paper Machine*, op. cit. p20

> Benjamin. Some computers will become museum pieces. The fetishizing drive has no limits, by definition; it will never let go.[159]

In 'Geslecht II', Derrida comments that Heidegger sees mechanization destroying the unity of the word, of speech and the hand - the violence done to the proper integrity of the word/speech/hand is exemplified in the action of the typewriter, lamented if not vilified by Heidegger.

> The 'typed' word is only a copy (*Abschrift*), and Heidegger recalls that first moment of the typewriter when a typed letter offended the rules of etiquette. Today, the manuscripted letter obstructs what Heidegger considers a veritable degradation of the word by the machine. The machine 'degrades (*degradient*)' the word or speech it reduces to a simple means of transport (*Verkehrsmittel*), to the instrument of commerce and communication. Furthermore, the machine offers the advantage, for those who wish for this degradation, of dissimulating manuscripted writing and 'character'. 'In typewriting, all men resemble one another,' concludes Heidegger.[160]

This then is the worry: that *techne* results ultimately in the disposability of the individual.

Gesture is implicated in the construction of genius and the ideological construction of artistic labour in Modernism as exemplary and unalienated. It seems to present the artwork and the artist with the opportunity to resist the 'commodity' and capitalism. The gestural quality that belies the physical 'presence of the artist's body' in production seductively suggests, at a material level, an irreducible spontaneity that is not unrelated to Derrida's conception of the 'event', something that can never be predicted or planned:

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159 Ibid. p29

160 Sallis, op.cit. p179

> One of the characteristics of the event is that not only does it come about as something unforeseeable, not only does it disrupt the ordinary course of history, but it is also absolutely singular.[161]

Furthermore:

> Giving should be an event. It has to come as a surprise, from the other to the other; it has to extend beyond the confines of the economic circle of exchange. For giving to be possible, for a giving event to be possible, it has to look impossible.[162]

Both the 'event' and the 'gift' are impossible when they are recognized: they recede as signature makes its promise. An artwork, planned and received, is incommensurable with conceptions of event and gift. Neither the event nor the gift can be 'said' or written. An artwork is necessarily (for Derrida at least) 'said', even (especially) when it does not, or is not configured to be able to, speak.

The absolutely singular, unforeseeable artwork is an impossible artwork, which is not to say that chance cannot be seen to have a role in production (a role which is historically variable). For example, chance assumes a role in the production of Duchamp's *3 Standard Stoppages* (1913-14), in which a rope is photographed as it lies having been dropped. Reputedly, it also played a part in Protogenes' painting of a rabid dog, when a sponge, thrown at the painting, accidentally creates the exact likeness of canine saliva. This legend of Protogenes, recorded by Pliny, is one of the examples used by Ernst Kris & Otto Kurz in *Legend, Myth & Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* to illustrate one valence the motif of chance has taken recurrently in artists's

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[161] Derrida, J. 'A Certain Impossibility of Saying the Event', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Winter 2007), p446

[162] Ibid. p448

biographies since Antiquity.[163] In the biographies they examine, the notion of chance inherits characteristics from the Greek hero and they contend that leitmotifs in these biographies are reiterated, almost unchanged, through to the Renaissance biographies written by Vasari. In this vein, the element of chance carries heroic values from Classical precedents into the Renaissance as 'talent', (because, like talent, chance manifests divine favour). The particular expression of chance is shown to be historical and it is possible to see chance operate in the mediation of gesture in Modernism. Through chance, divine favour and heroic exception fold into genius and talent, which fold into gesture. In studio practice, gesture cannot carry corrections (though it can be practiced) and so it appears to be unrepeatable.

With Duchamp as a precursor, during the 20th century chance has been elevated to the level of a self-reflexive process or methodology in art production, evidenced in, for example, John Cage's silent orchestral compositions. This elevation has blurred genre boundaries and played a significant role in the dematerialisation of the art object. In *appearing* to isolate the gestural, it *appears* to detach it from human agency, existing beyond the values of production, reproduction and language (beyond 'commodity') except as far as the artist can orchestrate and oversee the circumstances in which it might operate. The artist occupies the role of overseer and appears to have the power to (counter)sign for chance: Cage's composition, *4'33"* (1952), is a composition that, despite the complicity of the audience (their complicity is 'material'), accrues to 'John Cage' as an individual because the signature is attributed to him. Cage is a paradigm

[163] Kris, E. & Kurz, O. *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979), p45

figure for Nelson Goodman, who theorized the difference between 'autograph' and 'allograph' in terms of completion in *The Languages of Art*.[164] Bracketed by Cage, gesture is seen to be open to chance, a situation which partially detaches it from consciousness and the human body (which, nevertheless, might retain its historical role as a *medium*, a channel).

The appearance of gesture in artworks is seen to manifest chance and the aleatory, but for Derrida, if it does so, it does so as 'remains', as 'cinders': 'The originary process is combustion, immolation producing cinders – trace – not being.'[165] In Cage's work, signature's relationship to gesture is as a paradoxical ratification of human agency, of mastery over, and sensitivity to, chance. When the site of production in art is shifted to that which presents itself beyond *techne*, beyond alienation, signature as a determination gathers it in. Exaggerating the enigma of the paraph, gesture attempts to put maximum distance between itself and the practiced, repetitious manual skill of the artist, (the originary significance of whom is concomitantly exaggerated). Gesture also puts distance between itself and the demands of guaranteed non-variance that capitalism is seen to demand of mass production. The intentional, singular hand demotes aspects of the manual in visual art (those that represent the action of 'paired' hands) and transfers the balance of the power in touch to the complexities and splits involved in 'orchestration'. The demotion of manual skill occasioned by the valorization of the singular hand is an aporia in Heidegger's artisanally grounded art and a displacement which relocates skill in

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[164] Goodman, N. *The Languages of Art: An approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1976)

[165] Derrida, 'Dissemination', op. cit. p401

art outside manual production. Signature permits the gathering of relocated skill to itself as a point of relative stability, a substitute artefact.

3.3 THEORIZING THE PARAPH

Ironically, much of what has been said about impasto, gesture, material and physical trace attempts to 'dematerialise' (or denature) signature by obscuring its 'proper' legibility. In *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market*, Svetlana Alpers remarks on how 'touch' carrys in Rembrandt's impasto which obscures the 'craft of representation' by drawing attention to the materiality of paint.[166] Rembrandt tries to construct solid objects in opaque paint rather than alluding to the form of solid objects in paint applied in transparent layers and glazes (Venetian style). Alpers relates (the mediation of) this aspect of Rembrandt's work to Renaissance precedents: 'rough' (or unfinished) painting appealed to connoisseurs (as *maniera*). Connoisseurs had to learn to appreciate *maniera* in terms of qualities which were not obvious in paintings valued for their seamless, mimetic accuracy. Alpers also notices the prominence of hands in Rembrandt's work - 'exaggerated, almost grotesque in size' - and she chooses to feature a detail of a hand and sleeve from his painting *Lucretia* (1666) on the cover of her book.[167] She believes that the representation and trace of touch in Rembrandt's paintings gives access to *immediate*

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166 Alpers, op. cit. p14

167 Ibid. There are methodological points of contact between Alpers's observation of Rembrandt's hands and Derrida's observation of Heidegger's hands in the recovery and implications of 'touch'.

understanding: 'Touch is more immediate than the distanced eye…'[168] By making the materiality of paint representational, Rembrandt implicates the materiality of paint in/as his signature. However, Rembrandt's gesture cannot function as his signature or style autonomously, without reference to other instances of itself outside any individual painting.

3.3.1 TEMPORALITY AND ERROR

So, notions of *maniera* and gesture, unrepeatable and unforced, are well-established in art history. They have a sympathetic relationship to the conception of error, which, in *The Necessity of Error,* Roberts suggests characterized progressive aesthetic thinking at the end of the 19th century. *The Necessity of Errors* is an account of the productive role of error in constructing systems of thought, and in art, errors are not assimilated to art as an expansion of reason as they might be in politics or philosophy. They define artistic practice as 'indeterminate and stochastic'.[169] Roberts says that from the mid-19th century, painting opened up to the expressive demands of painterly inchoateness and to themes connected to modern urban life with the result that its subjects deviated from established academic practice and genres.[170] According to Roberts, at this time, technical 'mistakes' in execution not only stood, but were pursued or encouraged; deviations and mistakes marked the ambitions of artists, as well as their unrepeatable personalities. What might be

168 Ibid. pp24-25
169 Roberts, J. *The Necessity of Errors*, (London & New York: Verso, 2011) p209
170 Ibid. p211

figured as an academic transgression actually stakes a claim to be produced within an idiom immanent to art (at this time, 'Kantian' painting and sculpture). For Roberts, these transgressions opened onto an '*antisystematic* regime (of the indeterminate and the aleatory)' that formed the basis for a (renewed) 'discrete realm of judgment', a 'systematic antisystematicity'.[171] The signatory process bears some relationship to what makes anti-systematicity systematic.

In 'Otobiographies', Derrida discerns a grammatical (as opposed to speaking) subject at work in Nietzsche. The grammatical subject who defers 'signature' (the appearance of unity) to countersignatures, revisitations and *revenants* (and assumes to proliferate thereby) is necessarily an incomplete subject. It is the grammatical subject who steps outside the present to execute a 'capital cut' and breaks with unity. Such a subjectivity can only be elaborated and enacted polysemtically, plurivocally which the consequence that anything understood as 'transcendent' occurs through polysemetic, plurivocal structures. For Roberts, Nietzschean 'criticisms of the contemporary do have the merit of drawing attention to how questions of the actual, past and future are played out in the early years of modernism.'[172] If error had a generative role in Modernism, it was in appearing to secure mastery of the present (and of presence) for the artist who seeks to establish the idiom of art purely in relation to touch, making 'the actual' synoymous with the present.

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171 Ibid. p213

172 Ibid. p220

3.3.2 SKILL AND THE READYMADE

The issue of 'touch' is relevant to Roberts' earlier publication, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade*, which seeks to redefine artistic skills in the context of a labour theory of culture.[173] In the labour theory of culture, Duchamp is not the artist of consumption and consumer choice, but the artist of artistic labour. With the Readymade - *Fountain* in particular - Duchamp does not (merely) dissolve the residue of painterly or artisanal skills in the artwork, he actively and productively posits other skills. Roberts says that he insists 'on a point of mimetic identification between artistic production and social production. Art and social production (mechanization, reproducibility) become conjoined.'[174] Duchamp's mimesis – which denies 'touch' an originating autonomy - brings artistic and social production into an almost simultaneous relationship. The keyword in the preceding sentence is 'almost'. Signature permits, or maintains, a split.

For Roberts, Duchamp alters the relationship between the artist's eye and hand, freeing 'the hand' from the task of representation in order to elaborate the artist's conceptual schema, (singular, the artist's hand is one which can attributed production in its entirety). This allows the artwork to open out to a variety of non-manual skills and potentially to bring into focus the skills of others. If Duchamp appears to demote the singular hand, which, in Modernism, is nostalgically valorized in the face of a threat to the integrity of the human body posed by industrial machines, (the realization of an immanent similarity

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173 Roberts, op. cit.

174 Ibid. p23

between hands and prostheses), it is only as the manual hand. This is the hand which aspires to petrify its paraph in gestural sweeps as signature; which hovers uneasily between generic humanism and particular genius.

In Modernism, the nostalgic basis of the valorization of the singular hand is in dialectic association with clarion calls to 'newness' (in the unrepeatable actions of the *expressive* individual) and cannot be seen to tether to anything technical, practised and/or predictable. Touch defines the Modernist artist as a wholly integrated artistic subject in whom the division of labour is idealistically and ideologically contracted to a point of absolute integrity (like the Austinian signature):

> Modernist artists…have no material investment in *allowing others to complete or share work already undertaken*. What counts above all else under the new market conditions (specifically the rise of the small private gallery) is the uncertain and potentially novel execution of painting in *all its imagined purity*. If the authenticity of the act of painting is not to be forfeited, the making and execution of the work by the artist have to be seen to be indivisible; each mark has to be accounted for, so to speak.[175]

The issue of why 'new market conditions' should rely on the notion of an authentic, autonomous subject is a complex and deeply rooted art historical question on which the form and function of signature has some bearing. The notion of 'repetition without copying' is crucial to Roberts's understanding of the Readymade. When the Readymade opens the artwork out onto the general labour, it dilates and dilutes Modernist potency. Although Roberts styles the Readymade as 'replete' and 'intact' because, as an artwork, it is co-extensive with its formal object, and the notion of repleteness in any form is

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[175] Ibid. p145

antithetical to Derrida, the notion of 'repetition without copying' effects a similar action to that of Derrida's 'divided seal'. Roberts's point that the Readymade opens out to other hands before it is constituted as a work of art goes some way to denying it an autonomous presence (and presentness), a general *maintenance*.

In Derridean terms, the action of signature/countersignature that the Readymade foregrounds also delays its constitution as a work of art. In Derrida's understanding of signature, technical separations are not effected between work and author (which would require monumentality and permanence; the fixing of intent on both sides) but between receiver and sender (who may exist within the same person). It is Duchamp's awareness and rejection of the integrated, singular subject that characterizes him as an artist, consistently betraying truth (in what might be styled a signature move). Roberts's emphatic statement that:

> …the importance of the readymade lies in the way it assimilates the technical and technological processes of capitalist production in order to reflect on the possibilities and limitations of those processes of production for art. Without *repetition without copying* art would still be fixated by the idea that the manipulation of materials of art were incontrovertibly bound to the expressive movement of the hand.[176]

is not incompatible with a position informed by Derrida's construction of signature *vis-à-vis* the Readymade. In deconstruction, the technological processes of capitalism are like the technical operations of the grammatical subject, (though it should be noted that deconstruction is the political labor of hierarchical reversal rather than capitalist accumulation).

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[176] Ibid. p52

Roberts views 'the hand' in the context of social production as operative rather than constructive, and 'the hand' in artistic labour as (ideally) autonomous. If Derrida's signature might be styled as lowest common denominator authorship, his paired hands are similarly minimal when it comes to autonomy and artistic production: zygotic, they are already divided. To accord them autonomy as an entity – 'the hand' - is to equate them to the voice, to refuse their 'pairedness' and accord them singularity. For Roberts, if the Readymade deskills art, it reskills it at the level of general social technique, outside the academy and its hierarchies. The Readymade deskills art in order to displace expressive artefactuality. The skills involved in the production of a urinal; in orchestrating *Fountain's* rejection from the S.I.A. exhibition in 1917; in contextualizing Duchamp's delayed revival within the (emerging body of) Conceptualism, exist on a continuum with 'general social technique'. Indeed, the production skills to which Duchamp opens the artwork might be seen to have been presented and signed for in bad faith, parasitically, as someone else's skills. In effect, Duchamp cites skills in the manner of making an 'infelicitious' Austinian speech act, and it this citation that *his* signature floats over (not that of 'R. Mutt', which is a pictorial element). For Derrida, whichever hands come to the Readymade, whichever 'uses' those hands put the Readymade to, arrive through signature. Derrida's work can be used to demonstrate that 'mechanization', 'reproducibility' and 'artworks' are activities of signature: an artwork's authenticity never derives from completeness or self-sufficiency.

3.3.3 AUTOGRAPH AND ALLOGRAPH

The notion of completeness can be pursued through Goodman's *Languages of Art*, which provides a useful analysis of the differentials involved in locating authenticity and 'finish' in art.[177] Goodman distinguishes between artforms along lines of the 'autograph' and the 'allograph'. A work of art is autographic if the distinction between the original and the forgery of it is important, and allographic if it lends itself to notation. So physical identification of the product with the artist's hand assumes more importance in painting than it does in music or literature. Goodman understands the autograph as 'a history of production' into which gesture might be transubstantiated, however, in his understanding, the autograph can be 'handless', generated by a surrogate or prosthesis, at the artist's behest:

> authenticity in an autographic art always depends upon the objects having the requisite, sometimes rather complicated, history of production, but that history does not always include ultimate execution by the original artist.[178]

Music is allographic, and allographic art wins emancipation from the history of (its) production through notation (e.g. instructions for performance; for repertory). Aleatory processes play with clear-cut definitions between allograph and autograph, something Goodman acknowledges, remarking, for instance, on the 'rebellious', 'alternative' notation of Cage, whose 'scores' are 'autographic diagrams' marking the impossibility of notational fidelity.[179] They neatly conceptualize the difference between the singular and

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177 Goodman, op. cit.
178 Ibid. p119
179 Ibid. pp187-190

the similar in performance. The line between autographic and allographic work does not coincide with a division between what is manual or mechanical, nor between what is unique or multiple. For Goodman, it appears that the difference rests in a notion of 'completion'. Where art is read as allographic rather than autographic, it means that it is incomplete; conversely, if it is read as autographic, it may be seen to be complete. In marking completion, the autograph sets seal on form.

Autographs are, in common language, synonymous with signatures, *appearing* to authenticate and seal the having-been present of a specific individual - a 'requisite history of production' - which might also, therefore, be understood to be unreproducible: the autographic element in an artwork is that which is unreproducible because it is complete; the allographic element is that which is reproducible, incomplete. Derrida maintains that signature is an aperture, a stent which prevents completion. The artwork is always open to countersignatures. In these terms, signature is an allographic element rather than an autographic one: the autograph is reduced to an inconsequential trait, an empirical accident, which, unless/until it opens onto the Derridean abyss (as signature) does not extend beyond itself. Configuring the signature as allograph rather than autograph is important in understanding the operation of spectral logic - to go back to the Ghost in Hamlet, what we see in the 'autograph' is the covering visor; the 'armour':

> The armour, this 'costume' which no stage production will ever be able to leave out, we see it cover from head to foot, in Hamlet's eyes, the supposed body of the father. We do not know whether it is or is not part of the spectral apparition. This protection is rigorously *problematic* (*problema* is also a shield) for it prevents perception from deciding the identity that it wraps so solidly in its carapace. The armour may be but the

> body of a real artifact, a technical prosthesis, a body foreign to the spectral body it dresses, dissimulates and protects, masking even its identity. The armour lets one see nothing of the spectral body, but at the level of the head…The *helmet*, like the visor, did not merely offer protection: it topped off the coat of arms and indicated the chief's authority, like the blazon of his nobility.[180]

Derrida's extensive figuring of what is *capital*, 'head', 'authority' is brought to bear on the spectre. The visor, the armour, is the stasis we perceive.

3.3.4 UNREPRODUCIBILITY, SILENCE AND AUTHENTICITY

Confusion between autograph and signature allows the artwork to be (mis)read as complete. Conceding to Brunette that a painting by Van Gogh is irrefutably haunted by Van Gogh's body, Derrida contends that what he calls a 'body' isn't a presence:

> The body is, how should I say, an experience in the most unstable sense of the term; it is an experience of frames, of dehiscence, of dislocations. So I see a dislocated Van Gogh, one who is dislocated in the process of performing something…I relate to Van Gogh in terms of his signature – I don't mean signature in the sense of attaching his name, but in the sense that he signs while painting – and my relation to or experience of the signature of Van Gogh is all the more violent both for him and me because it also involves my own body.[181]

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180 Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* op. cit. p7

181 Brunette & Wills, op. cit. pp15-16

Setting aside what this paragraph means for experiencing/viewing an artwork, (there are hints that the viewer might be charged with finding a 'valid' countersignature), for Derrida, there is (Judeo-Christian) anxiety at play in the doomed attempt to restitute in plenitude the body of Van Gogh through his paintings. The act of signature is not a moment marking the completion of an artwork, nor is the act of signature strictly simultaneous with the making of an artwork. Neither is signature simultaneous with the involvement of the artist in its production. The act of signature is an appeal to countersignature, and it is the countersignature which establishes the first (not sole) signature as the signature of 'an artist' attached to an artwork. Somewhat unsatisfactorily, Derrida responds to Brunette as follows:

> ...the signature is not to be confused either with the name of the author, with the patronym of the author, or with the type of work, for it is nothing other than the event work in itself, inasmuch as it attests in a certain way – here I come back to what I was saying about the body of the author – to the fact that someone did that, and that is what remains. The author is dead – we don't even know who she or he is – but it remains. Nevertheless, and here the entire politico-institutional problem is involved, it cannot be countersigned, that is, attested to as a signature, unless there is an institutional space in which it can be received, legitimized, and so on...Without that political and social countersignature it would not be a work of art; there wouldn't be a signature…there is no signed work before the countersignature.[182]

Despite the act of painting as an act of signing which marks the artist's absence, it seems that the painting must be signed as an artwork before it can be signed by an artist - the signature of the empirical individual attested is dormant until effectively countersigned.

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[182] Ibid. p18

In a sense, Van Gogh already marks the removal of his physical body (his self-containment) when he paints because painting is an act of bodily extension. The notion of extension, (prosthetics, surrogates, supplements, mechanics, reproduction), is crucial to Derrida's conception of the body.[183] When the body attempts to represent the 'subject', it is as an experience of frames, of contexts, of dislocations; the 'body' is in constant flux; a particular 'thing' without 'thingness' - a thing describing motion and generated in/by/from motion. Touch as the pre-eminent sense because it is the sense which mobilizes other senses in accordance with its own motor activity.[184] Construing touch through its association to motion is very different to the construction of touch through an association with presence, (which is a function of sight).

A fully present artwork is a dumb enigma. In the interview with Brunette, Derrida distinguishes between the mute silence of something that can't speak and the taciturn silence of something that won't. In the first place, for the 'spatial artwork',

> …there is the idea of its absolute mutism, the idea that it is completely foreign or hetereogenous to words, and one can see in this a limit on the basis of which resistance is mounted against the authority of discourse, against a discursive hegemony. There exists, on the side of such a mute work of art a place, a real place from the perspective of which, and in which, words find their limit. And thus, by going to this place, we can, in effect, observe at a time a weakness and a desire for authority or hegemony…[185]

and in the second place,

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183 Derrida, *On Touching*, op. cit. p16. Derrida plays with the etymology of 'tact/intact', defining the 'material body' as 'some extended thing'

184 Ibid. p143

185 Brunette & Wills, op. cit. p13

> …and this is the other side of the same experience, we can always refer to the experience that we as speaking beings - I don't say 'subjects' - have of these silent works, for we can always receive them, read them, or interpret them as potential discourse. That is to say, these silent works are in fact already talkative, full of virtual discourses, and from that point of view the silent work becomes an even more authoritarian discourse – it becomes the very place of a word that is all the more powerful because it is silent, and that carries within it, as does an aphorism, a discursive virtuality that is infinitely authoritarian, in a sense theologically authoritarian. Thus it can be said that the greatest logocentric power resides in a work's silence, and liberation from this authority resides on the side of discourse, a discourse that is going to relativise things, emancipate itself, refuse to kneel in front of the authority represented.[186]

In the first place, the notion that 'spatial artwork' might be heterogeneous to words is presented here as an autonomy manifest as 'silence', and in the second place, that the idiomatic silence of the artwork occupies the *topos* of, variously, 'source', '*logos*', 'capital' in Derrida's theory. The artwork's seeming refusal to speak is an attempt to use unreproducibility to resist capitalist systems of exchange. The artwork does not seem to make the (same) promises that the commodity might be seen to make. When art's medium is treated as its idiom, it is not seen to promise anything beyond that idiom (i.e. it does not promise anything that it can't deliver, it is *there*). The idiomatic artwork reiterates the contradictions of the Austinian speech act. Like the unique signature that can only present itself as an enigmatic paraph within the terms of its promise to present itself again, the unreproducible artefact can only present itself as art when it is

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[186] Ibid.

reproduced as 'art', inscribed and mobilized as 'art', (in which case it's behaviour is no different to that of the commodity, even if it is not physically traded).

Addressing the issue of reproducibility and unreproducbility, Roberts finds Theodor Adorno's commitment to the artwork as unreproducible artefact limited in its scope to provide a liberatory and critical foundation for addressing art's relationship to productive labour.[187] Roberts says that for Adorno, art allows all moments of its production to be determined by the artist's subjectivity (which aspire to make it wholly unreproducible). The potential for reproducible art to operate as a critique of the value-form cannot be destroyed as long as it admits the transformative subjectivity of the artist 'all the way down' - through all the relations of production it exposes, through the complete, autographic history of production. Roberts does not consider the importance of signature as the mechanism by which an artist's transformative subjectivity may be carried all the way down, but if expressive artefactuality is made obsolete by the Readymade, it is conceptually remaindered in signature. Signature, which by the 19th century had acquired its everyday 'autographic' form, appears to be at once singular and expressive, yet it is reproducible. If signature is taken to symbolize a discernable and necessary link between the artist and reproducible artwork, it is because it guarantees an (immaterial) history of production. Signature is a catalyst and trace of the subjective transformation of one commodity into another, an anticipation and archive of attribution.

[187] Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, op. cit.

If unreproducibility (full presence, plenitude and completion) is equivalent to silence, that which manifests 'absolute mutism' positions itself *contra* the chatter of speaking subjects, against the commodity as an 'original'.

The original is, in Walter Benjamin's view, a pre-requisite for authenticity.[188] Wherever unreproducibility determines the relationship that artworks have with commodities and capitalism, the cult value and the aura of the singular (separate) thing are valorized, the ideology is Romantic and the object is 'placed on a pedestal'. Positing the 'pure' artwork through unreproducible material forms attempts to seal its singular place in time and space (as an object or an experience) definitively. Aura is understood to be a property of the original thing; it is held to be diminished by copies, by reproduction and by counterfeit. For Benjamin, 'aura' - transhistorically produced by ritual - 'withers' in the age of mechanical reproduction because duplicates and copies 'substitute a plurality of copies for a unique existence'. The artwork is permitted to range beyond the physical confines of a singular time and place and consequently opened out to political, rather than ritual, ends.[189] Plurality introduces the empirical possibility of near-absolute simultaneity in the production of multiples, disrupting the integrity of the *proper* object at source (there is no proper object). Benjamin does not notice the structural sympathy between ritual and reproduction in establishing aura - potentially endless, distributive production does not divide and diminish aura, it creates and guarantees it. In the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, (and in the Age of Print which preceded it), aura is constructed and

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[188] Benjamin, W. 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' *Illuminations* (London: Fontana, 1992) pp211-244

[189] Ibid. p215

restituted through familiarity - an anticipation of attribution and the recognition of an unrepeatable and authentic place in the past.

3.3.5 BENJAMIN & THE SPEECH ACT

In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Benjamin remarks, that:

> the uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who made it an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura.[190]

Is it possible to substitute 'signature' for 'aura' in Benjamin's statement? Benjamin does not explicitly state that the work of art incorporates tradition within itself, (the implication being that the work of art is historically contingent even if its aura is transcendental), but that is not far from his position to the concerns of Austin and Derrida (if 'speech act' may be substitued for 'work of art'). In fact, Benjamin carries on to say:

> for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual…instead of being based on ritual it begins to be based on another practice - politics.[191]

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190 Ibid. p217

191 Ibid. p218

The word 'parasitical' is telling. Benjamin's emancipation of the artwork does not seek to reserve or restitute its autonomy: he does not seek to emancipate the work of art from 'parasitical dependence', rather to substitute 'politics' for 'ritual' in its heteronomy. His use of the word 'parasitical' here in relation to the issue of reproducibility opens out onto SEC and *How to Do Things With Words*. To recall, Austin uses the word 'parasitic' to describe those speech acts that operate as 'infelicitous' quotations in order to put them aside from genuine speech acts; Derrida defines the structure of the speech act as necessarily 'parasitic'. Goodman is in accordance: 'In representation, the artist must make use of old habits when he wants to elicit novel objects and connections'.[192] If the auric work of art (one that has not been emancipated by mechanical reproduction) can be understood to be akin to an *Austinian* speech act, copies of that work of art are citations. Understood as a *Derridean* speech act, the work of art itself ('emancipated' or not) is a citation. Both the 'fabric of tradition' and the 'signature to come' (including the politically motivated countersignature) and copies of the artwork iterate that citation - repeating and altering it.

Derrida remarks that 'the act of signing' in Van Gogh's painting is more than the attachment of a name: the act of painting presents as 'event'. In contact with the speech act - the performative enunciation - the unreproducible artwork aims to petrify the 'event' in such a way as to keep it happening. Here, there is no split apparent between document and signature, which fuse as an entity, an unrepeatable singularity, past and present. The artwork appears to embody a self-sufficient *general mainentance*, a 'transcendental

[192] Goodman, op. cit. p33

presentness', and it is this 'transcendental presentness' that is required to manifest silence. As painting, signing constitutes the artwork schismatically. Derrida says:

> ...it is as if there had been for me, two paintings in painting. One, taking the breath away, a stranger to all discourse doomed to the presumed mutism of "the-thing-itself", restores, in authoritarian silence, an order of presence. It motivates or deploys, then, while totally denying it, a poem or philosopheme whose code seems to me to be exhausted.[193]

The issue of 'authoritarian silence, an order of presence' takes us back to 'Plato's Pharmacy', Socrates is relayed as saying:

> …that is the strange thing about writing that makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words.[194]

Silence is not beyond language, beyond writing as a 'thing' to be experienced rather than articulating (itself). Neither is it the place of a virtual discourse that is securely authoritarian because silence is boundlessly engaged in dialogue by speaking beings. The silent artwork is aphoristic. Lee Lozano's artwork, *General Strike Piece* (1969), in which the artist determined to make herself gradually absent from 'the artworld' by not attending gallery previews and artworld events, exemplifies such an aphoristic operation - the work is only know through its place in an 'artworld' firmament. For De Duve, who refers to Lozano's work in *Kant After Duchamp*, this illustrates that the minimum requirement for an artwork is that it is engaged in dialogue, that it is somehow recorded and communicated.[195] Silence must be heard as invisibility must be seen.

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193 Derrida, '+R (Into the Bargain)', *The Truth in Painting*, op. cit. p156
194 Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', op. cit. p137
195 De Duve, op. cit. p298

In Derrida's view, the operation of signature allows historians and theorists a quasi-theological licence to restitute the (named) artist as a presence. However, such a restitution serves the ideological or political interests of the agent who does the restituting and what is presented as presence is an experience of motion, the coalesence of frames. In this way, even where it appears in autographic artforms, signature is a stent which prevents completion, rather than the final act that seals it. Every artwork is an allograph. Signature is what makes gesture – which shares a field of operation with the event and the gift - readable, and what divides the singular, gestural hand. Readability (iterability) is what prevents an artwork existing autonomously in the transcendental present. In effecting the Readymade, Duchamp drew attention to the play of hands – physical and metaphorical - in the production of artworks. Rapaport suggests that Derrida is limited by his 'Kantian' view of art –the 'only' art Derrida considers takes largely conventional forms as paintings or sculptures.[196] In the light of their commonalities, it may seem bizarre that Derrida did not engage directly with Duchamp, (there was, for example, a significant retrospective of Duchamp's work, accompanied by the publication of a four volume catalogue raisonné, when the Centres Georges Pompidou opened in 1977, a high profile cultural event in Paris – the city in which Derrida lived). This said, for Derrida, the relevance of the artistic substrate or form is empirical rather than essential. That is not to say that Duchampian scholarship cannot benefit from a Derridean perspective (or vice-versa), but that at a functional level, specific art forms and materials are essentially inconsequential to him.

[196] Brunette & Wills, op. cit. pp151-167

PART 2

4. SIGNATURE AS WITNESS: *I WAS HERE*

4.1 THE COMMON SENSE MEANING OF SIGNATURE

Signature exhibits a complex temporality, presuming (to be able) to say, variously, 'This is mine', 'I was here' or 'I promise': it presumes to assert presence and belonging. In SEC, Derrida refers to the effects of signature being the 'most common thing in the world'. As a handwritten name appended to a document of some sort, the signature holds itself out to be unique and by that token, a guarantee of the specific 'having-been present' of the signatory, a verification of the truth as stated. In these terms, signature is understood to be simultaneous with the instance of a fully present individual who has either produced the document (text or artefact) which precedes the signature, or who understands and agrees with what has been produced in the document by someone else. The content of the document must precede the signature otherwise the signature cannot be taken to testify to its contents. Signature is then, apparently, a final act. It marks completion, sets seal on proceedings. Signature is generally understood to be commensurate with autograph and like a more convenient (readable) fingerprint, it is held

to pertain specifically to the individual to whom it can be attributed: it is held to pertain to the unrepeatable instance of that individual having manually put pen to paper.[197] Thus John Wilmerding, introducing his study, *Signs of the Artist: Signatures and Self Expression in American Paintings,* can say:

> Our signatures are unique. Our written names, even more than our handwriting generally, carry something of our individual personality…the mystique and legality of a signed name go back as far as handwriting itself.[198]

However, the particularities of graphic expression are historical as well as formal, and as an institution, the signature is not the immemorial, handwritten manifestation of pure personality that Wilmerding imagines. The size, form and pace of letters; the type of instrument used to execute the signature, (etymologically, the relationship of 'signature' to 'style' is carried through the *stylus*); the calligraphic flourishes which channel the hand of the individual; the incidental, additional, deliberate or absent dots and strokes which evidence the idiosyncrasy of the individual all combine in testament to the empirical event of signing, permitting, it would seem, a conclusive attribution in time and place. The invocations of criminal procedure in the notion of 'witness' that underscore signature's common meaning are thus not incidental, and, in terms of signature's relationship to cultural production, Foucault's claim that the author-function came into being in concert with individual liability for transgression in literature looks to be a broadly pertinent circumstance for it.

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[197] See for example: Cody, F. 'Inscribing subjects to citizenship: Petitions, Literacy Activism, and the Performativity of Signature in Rural Tamil India', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 24, Issue 3, (August 2009) pp347–380

[198] Wilmerding, J. *Signs of the Artist: Signatures and Self Expression in American Paintings*, (Yale University Press, 2003) *ix*

While Wilmerding associates the signature 'naturally' with the history of handwriting, the etymology of the English word 'signature' can be traced it back to the past participle - *signatu*s - of the Latin *signare*, which means to sign or seal, and it is in the artefactual legacy of the seal and signet that a more nuanced history emerges. Taken for granted as an autograph by Wilmerding in the 21st century, the apparent normativity of the written signature, indexed to the hand, is misleading. According to Patricia Rubin, prior to the 16th century, signatures resulted from the impression or stamp of engraved seals, less 'enigmatic paraphs' than heraldic ensigns, the impression of 'tools' held in the control of specific, representative authorities.[199] In this manner, for hundreds of years, the *Anello Piscatorio*, which forms part of the Pope's official regalia, officiated Papal bulls. In her history of writing, Albertine Gaur introduces the notion of signature through the objects used to mark property - branding irons for livestock, hallmarking stamps for metalwork – and dates the development of the signet and signet ring as far back as the third millennium BC in ancient Greece.[200]

As noted by Rubin, in its range of Latin meanings, *signare* means to coin as well as to seal. Despite some important functional differences, coins and seals share a conceptual inheritance that oscillates between generality and specificity in the fields of 'convenience' and 'promise'. Coins are generally convertible promises minted in advance of their use; seals mark specific promises that presume to locate proper authority incontrovertibly at the instance of application. Both are mechanistic and allow the exchange of goods and information to happen at a distance from their originators, (they

199 Rubin, op.cit.

200 Gaur, A. *Literacy and the Politics of Writing* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2000)

are thus proxies). Though Rubin dates the meaning of signature as 'one's own name written in one's own hand' to the 1570s, she traces the roots of the autograph back to the sixth century Christian world, when the word *signum* began to refer to the act of marking a document with the sign of the cross:

> It was present as the 'sign of the hand' of the person who dictated the document, but who could be illiterate, and as the professional mark of its writer, the notary. With the development of the notary's art in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the *signum* became the symbol of the public hand of the notary, the validating sign of his authority. Notary's signatures were registered and had legal weight.[201]

Sedimented in the meaning of signature – autographic and otherwise - are issues bound up with the establishment of efficient and reliable legal, financial and professional structures. Derrida's apprehension that signature is a *parousia* binds spiritual and administrative concerns together. Signatures also involve issues concerning the atomization of the individual through an internalizing movement that begins to institute the human subject - as opposed to the deity or the institution - as a source of authority. Conflated with the autograph, as signature, the seal loses its status as a necessary *object*, and - dematerialised in this sense - it is invested in the hand of an individual. The materiality of the seal is made synonymous with the corporeality of the subject.

In her study, Rubin aims to set aside 'the philosophical meanings of *signum*' in order to examine it 'in documentary contexts, in connection with the mark of the hand as

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[201] Ibid. p564. In the 21st century, digital technology is changing the character and function of signature: see Neef, S. *Imprint and Trace: Handwriting in the Age of Technology* (London: Reaktion, 2011); Neef, S. Van Dijck, J. & Ketelaar, E. (eds), *Sign Here! Handwriting in the Age of New Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006)

representing a residual, authorizing presence'.[202] It is questionable whether the philosophical meanings of *signum* can be wholly set aside from those that are 'documentary', as if a clean break could ever be made. It could be argued that the conceptual authority of signature - the punctuation it effects - is involved in any philosophy of the documentary. Signature dates, but it does not fix. It is always open-ended, presenting like a visor in documentary contexts from *both sides*. When Derrida strategically styles the handwritten signature a seal, he reveals the immanent and necessary iterability of that singularity which is taken to be synonymous with empirically unrepeatable personal autographs. He demonstrates that the mark of the hand has no 'presence' but that constructed for it by (the abyssal operation of) countersignatures. It is instructive that *firma*, the modern Italian word for 'signature', traces its history not through *signare* but through *firmare*, (to make firm), a root which pays into the English sense of the 'firm' as a group of people who have come together in commercial enterprise, (recalling Derrida's 'Sarl'). If the formal, (iconographic) development of signature has, since the 16th century, gradually privileged its autographic qualities over those of its instruments, in alluding to the functional, mechanistic legacy of the seal, Derrida's work moves to show that the lure of signature as a direct, permanent expression of (and substitution for) the 'intact' individual is a fancy and a foible.

One of the presumptions raised by the issue of signature in art concerns the implication that in signing objects, artists mark a point of completion, tightening and defining them as 'works'. Despite being the result of an everyday operation, the signature is seen to clearly

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[202] Rubin, op. cit. p571

demarcate artworks from the circumstances of their genesis and reserve them from 'everyday life', allowing them to be inserted into *oeuvres* and traditions. The signature appears to automatically re-sign art to the immediate past; to have a place to play in demarcating what exists as 'work'; to exclude or prohibit future working, amendment or alteration and thus, to influence and inform the way in which artworks are treated and held in posterity. When Robert Rauschenberg produced his *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953), cancelling the work of a previous (and celebrated) artist, or when Jake and Dinos Chapman worked on a set of Goya's etchings, modifying and overwriting them in their series *Insult to Injury* (2003), they deliberately challenge those notions of completion that accompany the signature and at some level appear to controvert the privilege of the autograph to signal the end. Demarcating an *oeuvre* amongst personal ephemera intensifies as a challenge in contemporary art not only because, (if we accept Boltanski and Chiapello's view), society organises itself along the lines of the Projective City, but because contemporary art has no material or representational idiom.

4.2 VAN EYCK'S SIGNATORY PRACTICE

The first work Wilmerding considers in *Signs of the Artist* is the *Arnolfini Portrait*. He accepts it as the key marker of the transition of the artist from 'anonymous artisan' to 'singular creative professional'. One of the most celebrated signatures in the history of art, the calligraphic inscription, '*Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434*', occupies a central place in the composition between two figures - one female, one male - which dominate the

painting, (Fig. 1). The inscription translates as 'Johannes de Eyck was here 1434'. Erwin Panofsky, for whom the inscription has given rise to much 'unnecessary discussion', is reminded of the 'undesirable epigraphs recording the visits of pilgrims or tourists to places of worship or interest'.[203] Despite Panofsky's pejorative tone, it is not bogus to link the signature to graffiti.[204] Extremely rare in art, the phrase *fuit hic* is actually better known from graffiti found in medieval churches, in the civic spaces of Imperial Rome, in the unearthed ruins of Pompeii; linguistic variants place it in inscriptions wrought by 11th century Norsemen at the Neolithic tomb of Maes Howe in Orkney and in those of the Archiac Greek inhabitants of Thera.[205]

Van Eyck's signatory practice, atypical for the time, is unusually rich and prominent. Including the *Ghent Altarpiece*, signed by both Jan and his older brother, Hubert, eleven of the 24 works currently attributed to him carry signatures, mostly painted on frames, and it may be speculated that his signature featured on at least some of the original frames missing for the remaining thirteen.[206] For example, the *Portrait of Cardinal Niccolo Albergati* (1432), does not have its original frame - it was shaped to fit the Gemaldegalerie, Vienna in the late 18th century and there is speculation that the frame

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[203] Panofsky, E. *Early Netherlandisch painting: its origins and character*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953) p180

[204] For example, Seidel, L. 'Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait: Business as Usual?' *Critical Enquiry*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Autumn 1989), pp54-86

[205] Schafer-Wiery, S. 'Graffiti & Art' [web document] http://mitglied.multimania.de/graffitiforschung/ArtGraffiti.html, (accessed 13th March 2013.)

[206] For Panofsky in 1953, Van Eyck's settled oeuvre was 12 or 13 paintings, 3 of which were unfinished at the time of his death. Of this oeuvre, 9 are signed. The oeuvre currently assigned to Van Eyck extends to 23. See Borchert, T-H. *Van Eyck*. (London: Taschen, 2008)

may have been discarded or mislaid during the process of installation. The *Arnolfini Portrait* is also missing its original frame, though it is highly unlikely that Van Eyck's name would have been insinuated amongst the verses from Ovid that it is reputed to have carried.[207] Individual points of difference between the relatively small group of paintings which constitute Van Eyck's settled oeuvre are necessarily emphasized given the size of the group, however, the quality of the difference between the *Arnolfini* inscription and Van Eyck's other signatory inscriptions makes it especially significant: the *Arnolfini* signature can be pitched directly against features common to most of the other signatures in the group. With one other exception, all Van Eyck's signatory inscriptions form part of the frame, usually with the appearance of having been engraved into marble. In that exception, *Portrait of a Man (Léal Souvenir)* (1432), a painting which is also missing its original frame, the inscription - like that of the *Arnolfini Portrait* - participates in the pictorial scheme, and, again like the *Arnolfini* signature, it employs a calligraphic script. However, the signature appears as if engraved on a stone parapet that acts, in effect, as a pseudo-frame, so specificities of its form and placement provide points of contrast to the *Arnolfini* signature. Within Van Eyck's oeuvre, then, the signature on the *Arnolfini Portrait* distinguishes itself in two respects, in terms of its vocabulary and its form.

Firstly, although *fuit hic* is a singular occurrence, the signatory vocabulary Van Eyck used is not entirely consistent and *fuit hic* is not distinguished by its singularity. For example, Van Eyck inscribed his name alongside the Latin term *complevit* (meaning

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[207] In *De Viris Illustibus* (1456), Bartolomeo Fazio describes the frame of the *Arnolfini Portrait* with reference to these verses without specifiying them. See: Hall, E. *The Arnolfini Betrothal: Medieval Marriage and the Enigma of Van Eyck's Double Portrait* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1997) p6

'completed') in the *Portrait of Margaret Van Eyck* (1439); alongside *actum* (meaning 'transacted' or 'done') in the *Portrait of a Man (Léal Souvenir),* and alongside the Dutch term *gheconterfeit*, (which has been variously translated as 'painted' and 'portrayed'), in the *Portrait of Jan de Leeuw* (1436). This means that *fuit hic* is just one of a few uniquely idiosyncratic terms Van Ecyk used. What is of interest in distinguishing the term from all these idiosyncratic others, as well as the more generally common term *me fecit,* (which Van Eyck used several times); what is indicative of a specific attitude is the conceptual association of *fuit hic* not with the process of production but with presence. Specifically, *fuit hic* cannot be read within the ambit of *me fecit* as can ididosyncratic terms like *complevit* and *gheconterfeit*. *Fecit*, the third person perfect of the Latin *facere*, means 'made'; *fuit*, as the third person perfect of the Latin *sum/esse*, means 'was'.[208]

Secondly, appearing on the painting, Van Ecyk's calligraphic *Arnolfini* signature distinguishes itself against the typical form and placement of his signatures as *trompe l'oeil* engraved majescules on frames. Van Eyck's frames themselves generally exhibit *trompe l'oeil* effects and there is a strong presumption in favour of his tendency to paint them in simulation of marble or porphyry. Only one of Van Eyck's *me fecit* signatures does not occur in tandem with a marbled frame, his supposed 'self-portrait', *Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban* (1433*),* (the frame of which is gilded and pseudo-engraved). Thus, making a reproduction frame for the *Lucca Madonna* (1436), Dr Jochen Sander and the Karl Pfefferle Company were persuaded that the original would have been marbled and so they imitated the frame of the *Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine and Michael and*

[208] See Harbison, C. 'Sexuality and Social Standing in Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Double Portrait', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer, 1990), p. 254, n.14.

Donor (1437) (the *Dresden Triptych*).[209] On the balance of probabilities, it is likely that the original frame of the *Arnolfini Portrait* would have been similar (i.e. marbled). Together, these points of distinction combine in the *Arnolfini Portrait* to assert the primacy of the artist over the object. In this sense, the *Arnolfini* signature has consequences for the way that the hierarchies involving the artist, object and viewer are figured.

4.2.1 PRIMACY OF THE ARTIST OVER THE OBJECT

Signatures using verbs like *facere* which are associated with production have an interrupted history extending beyond their Latin form, ultimately deriving from Early Greek and Etruscan precedents. Signatory verbs on Early Greek pots, for example - *egraphsen* and *epoisen* - are words which refer to their having been 'painted' and 'made' respectively.[210] The precise meaning of the *epoisen* signature (especially) has been debated frequently, with opinion wavering between whether the word refers to 'actual' potters or to workshop owners and overseers. Sir John Beazley, a prominent authority on the identification of Greek Pottery, wrote:

> Two explanations have been given for the epoise-signature. One, that it gives the name of the potter, the man who fashioned the vase; the other, that it gives no more than the

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[209] Karl Pfefferle Workshop: http://rahmenwerkstattpfefferle.de/english/references.htm , (accessed 3rd August 2013)

[210] On this subject see the notes of the Classical Art Research Centre: http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/tools/pottery/inscriptions/painter.htm , (accessed 3rd August 2013)

> owner of the establishment from which the vase came. At one time I held it more prudent to adopt the second explanation: but now I believe that, in general, the first explanation is the right one.[211]

Signatures on Greek pottery are known mostly from a single instance and *epoiesen* signatures are twice as common as *egraphsen* ones. A small number of vessels carry both *epoisen* and *egraphsen* inscriptions alongside the name of one individual, leading some to speculate that such signatures might mark the moment when a painter acquired his own workshop, or, alternatively that the entire object was fashioned by one individual.[212] Later Roman art and architecture carries inscriptions in both Latin and Greek, (sometimes together), which maintain a link to the processes of production.[213] During the Renaissance, Roman epigraphy played a significant role in the revival of signatory inscriptions on paintings and sculptures. However, the form of Renaissance inscriptions, (which are largely Latin, rather than Greek or vernacular, and often utilise Roman-style typography), is attributed to the role played by literary, Humanist interests in Roman descriptions of Greek art, rather than the direct adoption of the signatory habits presented by physical models. The work of Pliny in particular filtered through to affect the working practice of Renaissance artists.

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211 Beazley, J. D. *Potter and painter in ancient Athens*. (London: G. Cumberledge, 1944) p25

212 See Robertson, M. 'Epoiesen on Greek Vases: Other Considerations', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol.92 (1972), pp180-183

213 Lightfoot, C. 'Roman Inscriptions' *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/insc/hd_insc.htm (February 2009), (accessed 3rd August 2013)

Oskar Batschman & Richard Grenier, discussing the work of Hans Holbein, comment on the marked attention that Pliny's description of 'foundational' signatory habits received from artists in the early 16th century.[214] They quote the long dedication in the *Historiae Naturalis* in which Pliny says:

> I should like to be accepted on the lines of those founders of painting and sculpture who, as you will find in these volumes, used to inscribe their finished works, even the masterpieces which we can never be tired of admiring, with a provisional title such as 'Worked on by Appelles' or 'Polyclitus', as though art was always a thing in process and not completed, so that when faced by the vagaries of criticism the artist might have left him a line of retreat to indulgence, by implying that he intended, if not interrupted, to correct any defect noted. Hence it is exceedingly modest of them to have inscribed all their works in such a manner suggesting that they were latest, and as though they had been snatched away by fate. Not – 'Made by' so-and-so (these I will bring in at their proper places); this made the artist appear to have assumed a supreme confidence in his art, and consequently all these works were very unpopular.[215]

If this passage is to be believed, Appelles and Polyclitus manipulated their signatory vocabulary to serve two purposes - to expound their modesty and to defend themselves against criticism. What is certain is that these precedents are seen to have had a marked influence on Renaissance artists, explaining the form of Michelangelo's (sole) signature, for example. This signature uses *facere* in the third person imperfect as *faciebat*, and can

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214 Batschmann, O. & R. Grenier *Hans Holbein* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999)

215 Ibid. p24

be found on the *Pietà* (1498-99) (Fig. 3) in St Peter's Basilica.[216] The imperfect tense implies that, like Appelles and Polyclitus, Michelangelo does not (merely) finish work. His self-consciously reflexive signature is hardly an expression of modesty, used as it is to declare his rank as equal to the best of the Classical 'greats', but - unlike Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* signature - it maintains a necessary link with production.

In Van Eyck's signatory practice, whereas *me fecit* refers paintings internally to their own conditions as objects, *fuit hic* refers the *Arnolfini* signature outside of the painting to the artist. In *me fecit* inscriptions the general pronoun '*me*' specifies the primacy of the object over the artist, so signatures which use the phrase do not directly challenge the pre-eminence of the object's apparent subjectivity over that of the (remote) signatory even as they actively signal the 'productive' role and involvement of human agents in the realization of objects. Conceptually, in *me fecit* inscriptions, it is the object that is accorded the power of speech and presence, subordinating the artist to something like the role of mid-wife. *Fuit hic* does not declare the involvement of the artist in the manufacture of the object as does *me fecit* - tacitly, the artist does not serve the object. Wittingly or not, in the *Arnolfini Portrait,* Van Eyck directs attention to himself: his name is the primary proposition and seems to stake a claim on the Byzantine *acheiropoieta* tradition which *me fecit* inscriptions acknowledge even as they erode it, (*acheiropoieta* forms were believed to have supernatural origins - the Greek compound breaks into literal translation as 'without-hands-production' – so by asserting his presence

[216] Appelles and Polyclitus did not sign their work using the perfect tense, instead employing the 'aorist', a narrative tense not available in English but similar to the imperfect. See Rossignol, op.cit.

rather than his production, Van Eyck places himself in the role of supernatural originator). The claim to *acheiropoieta* in the *Arnolfini Portrait* is not straightforward - oblique knowledge of Van Eyck's position as 'painter' is required in order to stitch him to its production despite his signature. Significantly, this is information that the painting does not deliver immediately.

In representing his viewpoint as witness to the scene he has depicted and put before the viewer, Van Eyck subordinates the object to its 'proper' place as a vehicle for the particularity of his technical skill and vision: the vocabulary and manner in which he signs the work relate to this subordination. Like Michelangelo's *faciebat* and despite its perfect tense, Van Eyck's *fuit hic* is an active principle not the conclusion of service because, in combination with the naturalistic circumstances of the image, the signature directs viewers to look 'as if' through the eyes of 'Jan Van Eyck' and see 'now' what has been seen before, by him. The ambiguous pronoun '*hic*' means 'here' and represents an ongoing statement of place.[217] Viewers are directed to acknowledge the physical absence of 'Jan Van Eyck' as a nominal presence which meshes with their own physical experience - 'Jan Van Eyck' is absent in the space beside them, in front of the painting. In the anomaly of *fuit hic*, Van Eyck takes possession of the personal pronoun '*me*', not only trumping the object but staking a claim to breach the temporality of the merely present and the merely past. He attempts to reconcile the separation of viewer from artist: as an artist, he identifies with the viewer (not the object). Van Eyck's *hic* is simultaneously 'here' and 'there'.

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[217] *Hic* recalls Derrida's 'Wo? Da': see, 'Ltd Inc a b c…' *Limited Inc* op.cit. p33

4.2.2 LEGERDEMAIN AND THE DISPLACEMENT OF MATERIALITY

As mentioned, the operation of *fuit hic* relies on representational naturalism. In *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Panofsky writes:

> …a picture by Jan Van Eyck claims to be more than 'just a painting'. It claims to be both a real object - and a precious object at that - and a reconstruction rather than a mere representation of the visible world.[218]

For Panofsky, the object quality of Van Eyck's paintings is stressed by the *trompe l'oeil* treatment of their frames. It is as if surrounded by simulated stone painted on wood, Van Eyck's paintings are weighted, lent the appearance of a heavy object whose artifice is nonetheless declared in the signature apparently incised. Panofsky describes the simulation of marble as a *legerdemain* that emphasizes and glorifies 'the materiality of the picture', but makes no acknowledgement of the contradiction between *legerdemain* and 'materiality'.[219] As contradictory principles, *legerdemain* and materiality relate to the object in different ways - the former demotes 'inherent' physical qualities in favour of technical skill, a circumstance reversed in the latter. In a painted image, *legerdemain* constructs belief as the suspension of disbelief.

Rudolf Preimesberger contends that Van Eyck's painterly depiction of stone on frames and shutters marks the place of competition between sculpture and painting as a 'silent *paragone*', a competition painting is seen to win.[220] As *paragone*, painting subsumes

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218 Panofsky, op. cit. p180

219 Ibid. p181

220 Preimesberger, R. *Paragons and Paragon: Van Eyck, Raphael, Michelangelo, Carravggio, Bernini* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011)

sculptural materials, forms and techniques (e.g. engraving) to itself - it also plays with the expectations of scale, miniaturizing or reiterating 'life-size' according to the artist's design, making a virtue of the ability to simulate or deceive in paint. In choosing to imitate marble for the mouldings of his frames, Van Eyck effectively demonstrates painting's greater worth over sculpture. Painting is an art in which careful modelling (*riliveo*), mastery of perspective and acute observation could rationalize three dimensions in two.[221] The painter's pride in such mastery, which Preimsberger argues was provoked by a conceptual association with the climate of intellectual discovery and scientific theorizing, might be extended to cover the appearance of signatory inscriptions painted *as if* engraved on marble frames. If so, such inscriptions exist as declarations of technical achievement, setting seal on a declaration of the painter's victory over three dimensions.

Preimsberger remarks that in the *Dresden Triptych* - a small Annunciation scene painted on hinged panels which, when closed, reveal depictions of two small stone statues - Van Eyck deliberately breaches the aesthetic boundary set up by the frame because he extends the pedestals of the statues over it. Without this breach the frame is like a window onto the painting; with it 'In theoretical terms, it is as if Van Eyck has transcended the purely pictorial character of painting'.[222] The window analogy is somewhat misplaced, (the statues appear to be recessed or boxed), but Preimsberger uses it because he wants to inculcate the idea of looking past the painted surface in order to promote the idea that 'transcendence' is something that can be effected through an excess of skill. It is excess skill that makes the painting more than an image, unbinds it from the declared limits of

221 Ibid. p29
222 Ibid. p31

painted representation and makes opaque pigments behave unnaturally in order to convey transparency and invisible space. Equally, the encroachment of the pedestals over the frame can be read as a device that belies artifice, restating the (never purely) pictorial character of the painting: as a small, portable object, the painting was designed for private, devotional use that necessitated manual actions (opening, closing) as well as visual appreciation.[223] The owner and user of the *Dresden Triptych* knew (by handling) that the intrusion of the stone pedestal over the frame was a visual trick, and the painting reciprocates that knowledge. The painting acknowledges that it is in some sense complicit in denying itself as an object, (something that makes *trompe l'oeil* painting inherently camp).

As a pun, the incursion of the pictorial scheme onto the frame retreats from 'unsafe' illusions as much as it attends the artist's mimetic skill. The mimetic *legerdemain* reported to have been practised by the Greek artists, Zeuxius and Parrhasios, in which competing masteries of illusion are tested by the physical reactions they provoke, has frequently been viewed with suspicion for its ability to present the virtual as real.[224] At some level, mimesis is magical. More pragmatically and sitting in the background of Van Eyck's marbling, lie Andrew Martindale's remarks that, at this time, 'it was the power of the painter to conceal basic faults in workmanship which was particularly feared.'[225] Part of what Van Eyck accomplishes is making a virtue of the virtual against any such

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223 Richardson, C. M. *Locating Renaissance Art,* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press/The Open University, 2007), pp71-72

224 Kris & Kurz, op. cit. p62

225 Martindale, A. *The Rise of the Artist: In the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (Thames and Hudson Ltd. 1972), p18

suspicion, putting the ability to create illusion at the heart of 'good' workmanship. Where Van Eyck's signatures are employed on marbled frames which, unlike the naturalistic images they bind, are painted simulacra (lifesize), they are a wry acknowledgment of the success of imitation. in a Foucaldian sense, Van Eyck holds himself responsible for his pictorial transgression.

Van Eyck's preference for 'marbleing' his frames can be taken to be reflective of a general shift in painting away from what might be termed 'base materiality' towards 'virtuosity'. Michael Baxandall demonstrates that, in the 15th century, contracts for paintings were less likely to include clauses insisting on the verifiable quality of pigments than their predecessors and concomitantly more likely to include clauses insisting on the personal touch of a named master.[226] Despite the relative dearth of contracts relating to painters of the 'Northern Renaissance', (Baxandall's focus is specifically on Italian painters), the general tendency he describes can be imputed to the work of a well-travelled, well-connected painter like Van Eyck, who was attached to a Royal Court and venerated in Italy during his lifetime. According to Baxandall, in the contracts he analysed, 'conspicuous consumption' of materials became less important than 'conspicuous consumption' of skill, and this is indicative of a broadly accelerating cultural trend, not one confined to the production of paintings.[227]

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[226] Baxandall, M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)

[227] For a foundational insight into the development of 'conspicuous consumption' as a concept, see Veblen, T. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Penguin 1999)

If Van Eyck's marbled frames are read not just as *paragone* in the particular assertion of painting over sculpture, but also as *paragone* in the direct and general assertion of skill over material, their *trompe l'oeil* device is not only a straightforward display of skill but it occasions the displacement of materiality. Panofsky is right to remark on the importance of the marbling preferred by Van Eyck for his frames and to link it to materiality, but he because he doesn't conceptualize or explain the significance of the distance from materiality that *legerdemain* introduces, he reads Van Eyck's simulation as an apparent interest in asserting the physicality of the object. On the contrary, marbling steps towards 'dematerialisation' by asserting the superiority of illusion over 'base' reality. If there is 'glorification', it is through visual wit, technical skill and apparition. There is a very literal sense in which Van Eyck marginalizes 'materiality', pushing it to the frame where it is admitted as a simulacrum of itself, complicit with the viewer.

4.2.3 SIGNATURE, SUBJECTIVITY AND MARGINALIA

In a dialectical move, in the *Arnolfini Portrait*, Van Eyck's *undisguised* signature might be seen to have shifted from the margins, the *parergon*, (to use a Kantian term), to take up a central position on the picture plane. The centrifugal forces that pushed materiality from the painting to its frame, literally and conceptually, can be seen to have attracted the signatory inscription into the centre of the pictorial scheme. These forces are dormant in what Camille marks as a gradual shift from 'speaking words' to 'seeing words', a shift that he argues was fundamental to the development of medieval imagery in Byzantine

and Anglo-Saxon (Gothic) Psalters from the tenth century onwards.[228] Here, speech aligns with materiality and sight with *legerdemain*. The margins of the manuscripts considered by Camille are the locus of complex illustrations, known as 'marginalia', which exist alongside the main body of the text: 'this extra-textual space only developed into a site of artistic elaboration as the idea of a text as a written document superseded the idea of the text as a cue for speech.'[229] Prior to this supersession, in monasteries, the 'Word' was always performed *meditatio*, from memory:

> in the later 12th century, the page layout or *ordinatio* of the text supplanted monastic *meditatio*. Now it was the physical materiality of writing as a system of visual signs that was stressed, this shift from speaking to seeing words is fundamental to the development of medieval imagery.[230]

Camille links the shift from speaking to seeing to a gradual decrease in the decorative ornamentation of calligraphic elements in manuscripts.

As ornamentation decreased, the physical materiality of writing began to correspond with its legibility. Thus, legibility can be seen to demote the physical materiality (visual density) - the singular 'presence' - of the word. The more that words had to operate immediately, unpracticed, on sight, the less scope there was to obfuscate their functional form with decoration. Seeing words for reading necessitates a denudation and decluttering of the centre in order that the script become legible. Naked, words and texts are (potentially) available to a greater readership; they are beginning to be able to be democratized. Camille argues that as ornamentation was pushed out to the margins of the

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228 Camille, op. cit.
229 Ibid. p18
230 Ibid. p20

page and it was less integrated with letterforms: extraneous, it took on a different character, formally and functionally. Set aside, less central, its decorative impulse mutated. Marginalia finds its origins in ornamentation but interacting with the main body of text narratively, as comment from the wings, it began to signal the subjectivity of the scribe, that is the person(s) engaged in the physical production of the manuscript. No longer solely servicing the letter-form, ornamentation acquired a degree of unregulated autonomy because what is 'outside' - decentred - interrupts integrity, dogma and orthodoxy. So, in certain aspects, manuscript marginalia shares traits with Classical graffiti. Writing about Roman epigraphy, Alison Cooley remarks on the pitfalls of the tendency to assume that the vernacular, casual aspects of grafitti make it irrelevant as a source for history because it is not orthodox:

> ...it is true that many graffiti, such as the caraciture labelled *rufus est* ('it's Rufus) in the 'Villa of the Mysteries' at Pompeii are self-indulgent scrawls to which their authors may not have paid any attention, but this is far from the whole story. [231]

One of Camille's purposes in writing *Image on the Edge* was to challenge the notion that the pious and the grotesque exist as separate parallels. In the margins, the pious and the grotesque are mixed and 'in-between'. The sympathies here with Derrida's philosophical enterprise are marked, though Derrida does not feature in his bibliography. Camille's examples show margins as places for ribald play, depictions of self are 'monstrous', ambiguous and liminal, 'areas of confrontation, places where individuals often crossed

[231] Cooley, A. *The Cambridge Manual of Epigraphy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p111

social boundaries'.[232] For Camille, the cultural implications of this mean that ornamentation can be lawless: the visual clamour of the margins giving voice to those who have had no voice. Marginalia undermines the universality of the written word, affronting rather than assuring, disturbing and destabilizing rather than creating accord. As decoration, marginalia interrupt beautifully illegible texts.

Camille attributes the flourishing of marginalia to growing self-consciousness amongst artisans at this time, citing the inclusion of *corrigenda*, (additions or corrections to the text), which are playfully pointed out by 'textual construction workers', as an instance of such self-consciousness:

> Self-representations by medieval artists in all media are more common than one might suppose…. there are a large number of images, especially from the 12th century, showing artists at work, which should make us question the cliché of medieval anonymity. It was not that the artist was a nobody, it was more a matter of his situation relative to the body, the Word of God that was his subject. Even if his art was not religious and he worked for a secular lord designing tapestries and armorial pageants, his position was still subservient and secondary to the 'Lord'.[233]

A particularly apposite example, though not one considered by Camille, is to be found in in a 12th century codex in the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana in Cologny, Switzerland.[234] Insinuated in a letter 'R', an illumination carries a pictorial depiction of a monastic scribe, surrounded by his tools, engaged in painting the tail of the letter alongside the

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232 Camille, op. cit. p9

233 Ibid. pp149-150

234 Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 127 (Wessenauer Passional), fol. 244r, http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/cb/0127, (accessed 6th August 2013)

signatory inscription 'FR. RUFILLUS', an inscription is taken to be indicative of his name. Whilst the conclusion that the text has therefore been produced by Fr. Rufillus could be taken to follow, there is no natural link between the name, the pictorial illumination and the scribe of the text: what looks like it might unify these three elements is the notion of 'self-depiction'. There is no way of ascertaining whether the illuminator who produced the depiction is drawing himself, (indicating that he is Fr. Rufillus), or depicting someone else engaged in the activity of painting, (a Fr. Rufillus who is not him). Nonetheless, whoever reads the manuscript is forced, by this signature, to recognise the grounds for affinity between the unseen illuminator of the manuscript and 'Fr. Rufillus', even if, (to recall a trope from the Derrida/Searle debate), the 'Fr. Rufillus' is, as illuminator, 'merely' absent to himself. The operation of affinity in this way is a feature of marginalia as Camille reads it. It is not a consequence of an individual integrated 'creative' self that manifests itself in personal expression.

Having noted that the most active trading places, (Paris, Ghent, Bruges and London), were those producing the most manuscripts, rather than examining them for depictions of mercantilism or the value of materials, (conventional departure points for those looking to analyse the historical workings of the market in art), Camille finds representations of 'urban marginals' in mariginalia. He details instances of painters (illuminators) representing themselves alongside beggars, prostitutes and the like:

> In the list of 'illicit trades' reviled in the Medieval West as studied by Le Goff, we read not only of butchers, innkeepers, jongleurs and, of course, prostitutes, but also of

> painters. Most of them had small family businesses which were nothing like our ideal notion of the workshop.[235]

There is sympathetic recognition between the painter and other illicit traders. Camille considers the socially marginal position of many of these Medieval artists - not all monastic - at a time of nascent capitalism, associating 'class' self-consciousness with a division of labour introduced into the production of illuminated manuscripts during the 13th century:

> whereas in the previous century the text-writer and artist of a book were often one and the same, increasingly the two activities were practiced by different individuals and groups. The illuminator often followed the scribe, a procedure that framed his labour as secondary to, but also gave him a chance of undermining, the always already written Word.[236]

Self-consciousness, an autonomy which undermines authority and *expression* (so often read as the preserve of 'pure' art), flourishes in the margins where it marks social affinities, causing problems for genius theories of individuated authorial self-inscription which rely on the same foundations (self-consciousness, autonomy and expression). In Camille's study, self-inscription - the allusive base of artistic freedom - is not geared towards establishing a sovereign individual, but towards representing lived experience outwith the higher echelons of society. As such, subjectivity is not asserted tightly bound to the self, (or the self-sufficient object), rather it is perceived in others, as witness to shared experience. The division of labour ruptures the centralised, mystic power of the Word, which is ideally entire; in this it is liberatory.

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235 Camille op. cit. p147

236 Ibid. p22

Though Van Ecyk was working some two hundred years later than the period Camille is interested in, he is believed to have started his 'career' as a book illuminator and is credited with the work of 'Hand G' in the *Turin-Milan Hours* of the Duc de Berry. It is true to say that neither Van Eyck's illuminations nor his panel paintings reflect the ribald play of the Gothic marginalia considered by Camille. Nonetheless there appears to be a generative cohesion of conceptual circumstances between Van Eyck's work and that of Gothic illuminators: if Van Eyck's marbled frames represent a materiality pushed out to the margins by technical skill, and the emergence of marginalia is involved in a move from 'speaking words' to 'seeing words'. The critical displacement involved in both is a decentering that invokes Derrida's deconstruction of the myth of Thaumus and Theuth in *Plato's Pharmacy*. When artitsic skill successfully challenges the omnipotence of an object's material presence, the universal power vested in 'presence' can accrue partially, to human agents, because, demoted in its materiality, the painted object no longer serves as a prop or channel for deity. What is challenged in both marbled frames and manuscript marginalia is the form and possibility of 'presence'. When it is readmitted to art, materiality is associated with human touch and genius. Paradoxically, signature, which has had a part to play in moving materiality out, is the device by which readmission is made.

4.2.4 MATERIALITY, COMMON CULTURE & COPYING

As mentioned, when Panofsky reads Van Eyck's marble frames as an emphasis of 'object quality', it is tempting to suggest the opposite and claim that the frames dematerialize material and materialize skill. It might be provocative, given the virtuosity and technical advances of Renaissance paintings, to suggest that, against the foil of their Byzantine predecessors, the 'object quality' of the former is less important than that of the latter, but in terms of the production processes that vest aura (wholly) in objects, this is the case. Conceptually, Byzantine icons bind aura to the material singularity of the object, not to the originality of an image. Self-similar, icons derive their value from expensive materials like gold and ultramarine as well as from the constancy of images. Repetition binds the incidence of materiality more tightly, necessarily and internally to the instance of an image derived from copybooks. Manifest in singular, specific objects, Byzantine icons provide a recognizable habitat for the manifestations and experience of deity. Ultimately, Renaissance paintings and sculptures begin to devolve aura to the singularity of the subjective vision - that of the artist - and there is, progressively, a relative deflation in the intrinsic value of materials, of the binding of the image to its substrate, and a location of specificity outside the object.

Complex inheritances subjugate the artist to the object in Byzantine culture. Art of the Modern era, (rooted in the Renaissance), might be broadly characterized as art in which the painter or sculptor has become more important than the object. Characterizing art in this way provides an opportunity to change the conventional emphasis in historical

narratives which see the artist separate from the artisan, because if *legerdemain* is seen to displace materiality and, concomitantly, the margins are seen to give play to decentred, critical voices interrupting 'presence', the artist can be seen to emerge principally against and through the object.

In pursuit of this idea, what Camille writes about the condition of making before the 12th century is pertinent: 'you can do nothing of yourself'.[237] The pre-Renaissance production of Christian icons is thought to have closely followed written descriptions such as those contained in the manuscript of Ulpius the Roman's *Eccelesiastical History*, something read from the perspective of the twentieth century as creatively restrictive 'copying'.[238] While established formulas for depicting images in icons were routinely copied, new formulas or images could also be revealed *ex nihilo*, mediumistically.[239] Even so, in this visionary capacity, the icon painter served the vision transmitted to him, and was obliged to embody it in a sacred object without personal interference or individual gratification. *The Rule of St Benedict*, a codified set of religious precepts which dates from the sixth century AD, states:

> If there be skilled workmen in the monastery, let them work at their art in all humility, if the Abbot giveth his permission. But if anyone of them should grow proud by reason of his art, in that he seemeth to confer a benefit on the monastery, let him be removed from

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237 Ibid. p149

238 John Lowden suggests that Ulpius's manuscript may have been a literary exercise (a work of art) rather than a technical manual. See Lowden, J. *Illuminated prophet books: a study of Byzantine manuscripts of the major and minor prophets* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988) pp61-62

239 Mango, C. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p211

> that work and not return to it, unless after he hath humbled himself, the Abbot again ordereth him to do so.[240]

Far more than merely setting down prohibitions concerning the signing of individual works, *The Rule of St Benedict* prohibits 'secret' pride in what is produced. Icons are understood to have to be wholly autonomous from the artisans that serve them by bringing them into being. Iconic images may descend to the artist but they originate with God. 'Unpainted', *archeiropoietic* images were 'therefore especially authentic'.[241] They include the 'Image of Edessa', the 'Veil of Veronica', the 'Shroud of Turin' - images purportedly created by the impression of Christ's face and body, 'a relic of physical contact'.[242] Similarly, the fixed form of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child in (a) Hodegetria Madonna reiterates a (lost) original considered to have originated with St Luke, the patron saint of artists.[243] Necessarily, icons do not carry signatures, but the issue of provenance, (in terms of their connection to relics, the appropriateness of the artist's attitude and their adherence to proper form), which segues so fully with what signature is supposed to assure, is of absolute importance.

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240 Verheyen, Rev. Boniface (trnsl.), *Holy Rule of St Benedict*, (1949) Rule.57 http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule.lix.html, (accessed 26th August 2013)

241 Belting, H. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Man*, (University of Chicago, 1994)

242 Ibid. p53

243 Ibid. pp73–77

4.2.5 NATURALISM AND THE ARNOLFINI CONTRACT

In analysing the relationship of painting to materiality and forms of secular self-representation, conceptually, both Preimseberger and Camille clear space. Van Eyck's signature in the *Arnolfini Portrait* can be seen to occupy this cleared space. The success of the occupation in terms of insinuating 'his' presence, relies, for its impact, on the quality of painted naturalism with which it is coupled. Naturalism is what allows Van Eyck to demote the physicality of the object and assert his primacy over material then to claim that 'he was here'. In assessing the critical terms used to judge paintings in Renaissance Italy during the 15th century, Baxandall remarks on the importance of the phrases *imitatore della natura* and *imitatore del vero* in setting up 'an unspecified realism'.[244] Imitation of nature segued with the representation of truth in naturalism, and to a degree, the signatory inscription on the *Arnolfini Portrait* sits as a critical *punctum* of that joining. Whereas the temporality of Byzantine icons is a universal 'now' that is transcendentally static and elsewhere, Van Eyck's *fuit hic* marks the trace of 'real' time ('then and now') in synthesis with the domesticity of the interior depicted. It indicates the room, the couple and their possessions without *direct* reference to the artist's role in the realization of a production process or 'making'.

Van Eyck's naturalism, the life-like, 'believable' quality that imbues his work, is constructed with reference to secular, contingent environments which are seen and reported – not channeled or designed to adhere to religious edicts. This is necessary to the

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[244] Baxandall, op. cit. p119

ambiguous operation of *fuit hic*. Had *fuit hic* been signed on a Byzantine-style image, a flat image lacking a sophisticated understanding of perspective and produced without recourse to the then innovative technique of using oil as a medium for pigment, (a technique that, critically, allows the painter to control the modulations of light and shade), the signature could not unable draw the artist 'Jan Van Eyck' into the pictorial scheme as a witness (it is instructive that, for centuries, Van Eyck was credited with inventing oil painting).[245]

The split between a representational 'here' and a physical 'here' is narrower in a flat icon than it is in a naturalistic panel painting. In presenting a believably life-like scene, Van Eyck encourages those looking at the painting to believe that what is represented has actually been seen and recorded by the artist - the skeins of fixed iconography unravel in naturalism. The effect of *fuit hic* in the *Arnolfini Portrait* is to shift the locus of 'looking through' further back than the compositional frame of a window: looking at the *Arnolfini Portrait*, Van Eyck's eyes are prosthetically, verifiably before us. He relays a scene that has been witnessed and testified to in the real, 'earthly' world. He signs in the gap between image and reality in which naturalism appears to broaden, forcing the representational 'here' to recede from the (present) physical 'here', also forcing the viewer to take account of the fact that the image is elsewhere and the artist is testifying to that.

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[245] Vasari records 'Giovanni da Bruggia' (Jan Van Eyck) as the inventor of oil painting in the 'Life of Antonello da Messina', although this story has been discredited since the 19th century. See Vasari, G. *The Lives of the Artists*, (Oxford Classics, 2008), pp185-190

In *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution*, Pamela Smith refers to Van Eyck's use of *fuit hic* rather than *me fecit* when she sets out to establish a shift from making to seeing in the Early Renaissance - the importance of vision observed by Camille *contra* speech is specifically reiterated by Smith *contra* the point of production.[246] She contends that in the *Arnolfini Portrait*, Van Eyck was, as a painter, acting as a witness. Smith calls this 'autopic authority', relating the authority of artistic eyewitness to the *autopsia* of Renaissance anatomists and European explorers traveling in the New World. She comments that the notion of autopic authority gained momentum in the 16th century because it established the importance and validity of personal praxis in developing epistemology. Practical knowledge (derived from the application of artisanal skills and experience) and, more importantly, the observation of results, has a formative place in developing 'science'. The incipient division between 'fine art' and 'craft (artist and artisan) is constructed according to the locus of the 'eye'. Sight is disconnected from tactility, divorced from a necessary relationship with object.

The displacement of materiality is evident in the move Smith notices from hand to eye, and she sees the 'artistic' self-consciousness emerge as a consequence of observing and recording. The autopic artist is, in effect, a Modern artist, who emerges against the material object and against those who are tied to the materiality of objects: those artisan trades which were not involved in leading the 'autopic' revolution are remaindered. The signature Smith styles as 'autopic' stakes a claim on truth and document as witness, not as maker - although it is technical skill as maker, the ability to produce a convincingly

246 Smith, op. cit.

naturalistic image, that qualifies the witness. In art as in science, observational skills can be seen to institute the long trajectory that runs from (intrinsic) value in material, to (imputed) value in trace. In the displacement of deity and materiality, the seeing eye triumphs over the speaking mouth and making hand to register the artist, who has achieved agency against the object, as witness.

So, the signature of the artist is of crucial importance in supporting Smith's theory of autopic authority: the signature denotes that what is represented *has been seen*. The status of the artist as 'truthful' (authentic) witness is founded on the ability to render lifelike images, and, in the case of the *Arnolfini Portrait*, the 'truthful' image is verified by a legible, apparently notaristic signature. Following Panofsky, Smith is inclined to accept the signature on the *Arnolfini Portrait* as having a role in 'legally authenticating' the image. For Smith, it is Van Eyck's mastery of naturalism that gives credence to the claim that his representations were 'legally' accurate - she compares his practice to that of the 16th century aristocratic botanist and illustrator, Gherdardo Cibo, who, alongside his accurate depictions of botanical specimens, depicted himself in the act of discovering the plants, recording written descriptions of the day, time, place and circumstances of the discovery.[247] Smith interprets Van Eyck's *Portrait of a Man (Léal Souvenir)* (1432) as a legal document, registering the translation of *Léal Souvenir* as 'Legal remembrance' (Panosfsky translates it as 'loyal remembrance') and the accompanying inscription as 'Transacted on the 10th day of October in the year of our Lord 1432 by Jan Van Eyck'. Smith's translation of *actum* as 'transacted' has a legalistic character and serves her

247 Ibid. pp 42-44

purpose of progressing the idea that Van Eyck was not a general witness, but a self-aware, civically empowered witness guaranteeing the veracity of his images *with force*, legally.[248]

When the metaphor became available, Van Ecyk's 'autopic authority' was compared to the apparently objective, evidential action of cameras. Ernst Gombrich says of the *Arnolfini Portrait* that:

> The picture probably represents a solemn moment in their lives – their betrothal…Probably the painter was asked to record this important moment as a witness, just as a notary…This would explain why the master has put his name in a prominent position on the picture….We do not know whether it was the Italian merchant or the northern artist who conceived of making this use of the new kind of painting (oil), which may be compared to the legal use of a photograph, properly endorsed by a witness…For the first time in history the artist became the perfect eye-witness in the truest sense of the word.[249]

Like Smith, Gombrich explicitly links the notion of 'eye' witness to signature as the proper endorsement of acute naturalism and attention to minute detail. In this Gombrich builds on the idea, introduced by Panofsky, that Van Eyck's naturalism is objective, technological and machine-like. For Panofsky, Van Eyck's mimetic ability was 'a microscope and a telescope at the same time'.[250] Underlying each of these circumstances - legal force and photographic quality - is the idea that the painting (a representation) is not

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248 Ibid. p42

249 Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1972) pp180-1

250 Panofsky, op. cit. p182

'merely' subjective, that it has a supra-subjective, institutional place that is 'objective' and independently verifiable.

4.2.6 HETEROGENITY AND DEHISTORICIZATION

The notion of 'independent verification' is perhaps one that carries over into the form of the *Arnolfini* inscription. If the naturalistic, hyper-focus of Van Eyck's depiction of the interior, figures and objects is taken to verify what has been seen, what was there before the artist and faithfully reported as such, the signature strikes the viewer as a moment of *absolute* realism which supports the appearance of the painting as a *document*. There is no apparent pretence or deference to pictorial representation in the signature of the *Arnolfini Portrait*: the signature is 'real handwriting' which does not participate in illusionistic space, integrated into the pictorial scheme. Edwin Hall, somewhat unconvincingly and without much historical substantiation, advances the idea that the *Arnolfini* signature could actually have been painted on the wall of the room depicted by Van Eyck: 'Manuscript miniatures suggest that mottoes and pious inscriptions were actually sometimes painted on the interior walls of Flemish Houses.'[251] Hall's theory is improbable - the signature is neither motto, nor pious inscription - but on these terms, the signature would form part of the 'naturalistic' representation of the interior, and such naturalism would negate the moment of absolute realism that the 'applied' signature encapsulates. In the *Arnolfini Portrait*, the 'naturalism' evidenced in the acutely observed

[251] Hall, op. cit. p122

painting abuts the signature's 'realism' - the calligraphic signature requests immediate appreciation of it as a non-artistic form announcing itself apart from the rest of the painting, even as it takes centre-stage. This realism effectively short-circuits and closes off representational naturalism.

On the frame, Van Eyck's signatory inscriptions take up their proper place on the periphery of the painting, they simultaneously contain the painting and serve it as an object. In the *Arnolfini Portrait*, the obvious heterogeneity of the signature to the image in which it is situated appears to catalyse and present a separation of text from image. The signature stands apart from the object, dominating it and anticipating the autographic form artists's signatures took in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is the form and vocabulary of the *Arnolfini* signature, the collusion between the unmediated realism of its Gothic lettering *contra* the sophisticated naturalism of the image, that have led readings of it as an act of witness - to a marriage or some kind of betrothal ceremony - and characterized the painting as a document, a quasi-certificate.[252] The schism that this heterogeneity presents is essential to 'witness', to 'autopic authority'. The change in pace between illusionistic image and real handwriting (which guarantee 'presentness' in different ways) - the friction between their registers of expression - is what generates the painting's enigma and on-going scholarly appeal.

In the *Arnolfini Portrait*, Van Eyck's signature exhibits an obvious and immediate heterogeneity to the pictorial scheme. The notion that it is a quasi-notaristic signature

[252] Seidel, op. cit. pp54-86

effecting the painting as a quasi-legal certificate, relies on this heterogenity. Though he found Van Eyck's signature bothersome, Panofsky's treatment of the painting as a clandestine marriage was aided by its hetereogenity. Setting aside Hall's unique contention, which, were it accurate, would compress the signature and image together in one seamless scene, it is the signature's heterogeneity to the pictorial representation that lends it the ability to appeal to an extrinsic authority, an authenticity unmediated by 'art'. To reiterate, the signature appears as unmitigated moment of realism that coincides with, and splits from, the naturalism of the image. It appears to be a 'real', secular signature with a cursive form akin to that of signatures on letters and certificates, rather than a pictorial inscription in carefully incised capitals apparently carved on statues and buildings, (and represented as if carved on frames). It is not mimetic or representational.

Bothered by the rub of realism against naturalism, Hall's general argument in *The Arnolfini Portrait* is that the 'truth' of the painting has been obscured by the layers of postmodern revision and that this has led to the 'progressive dehistoricization of the portrait' in the name of 'iconography'. He locates Van Eyck's 'cryptic' signature at the heart of this dehistoricization, which is why he attempts to resolve its ambiguity by painting it into the *Arnolfini* chamber. For Hall, the signature was responsible for Charles Eastlake's serious misreading of the painting as a self-portrait and it behaves like a key unlocking misadventure for iconographers and 'postmodernists' alike.[253] In this respect, he is particularly concerned to locate the significance of the signature in driving

[253] Charles Eastlake was Director of the National Gallery, London when it received the *Arnolfini Portrait* in 1847. He translated the inscription as meaning 'Jan Van Eyck was this' (man). As a pronoun *hic* can mean 'here' or 'this'.

'postmodern' history, (which he disparages). What escapes him, as it does many others, is the particular ruse signatures play with historical significance, because if significance cannot be conclusively recovered through the signature, it is down to the enigma of a paraph that does not tether definitively to source but is not without historicity. Hall's work on refuting the idea that the painting represents a clandestine marriage makes extensive, detailed and convincing reference to what is (now) known about Medieval marriage customs, but his own historical contextualization of the actuality of written inscriptions on the walls of Flemish interiors is almost purely conjectural and that is permitted by the signature.

For Craig Harbison, a former student of Panofsky's and one of the 'postmodernists' whom Hall styles as playing fast and loose with the meaning of the *Arnolfini Portrait*, the artist is not present principally as a 'witness' indicated by the unusual circumstances of the signature, rather, the artist is a:

> story-teller, realizing the multi-valence of any incident, any object, any detail in a nouvelle such as this…In the Arnolfini double portrait Jan van Eyck was certainly there. Craftsman, magician, and social commentator… [254]

If the signature is seen by Hall to permit the fancies of scholars like Harbison, it is seen by Harbison himself to frustrate them, to divert 'proper' attention. Harbison is not persuaded to the notion that the painting could have had legal force at anytime, commenting that 'a work of art would not stand up as fact in a court of law then anymore than it would today'.[255] For Harbison, legalistic interpretations of the painting privilege

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254 Harbison, op. cit. p288-289

255 Ibid. p252

unsustainable empirical assumptions over a sensuous and ambiguous symbolism in keeping with the cultural mores of the time. He favours the notion that the painting might commemorate a secular annunciation, hinting that if Giovanni Arnolfini is not pregnant, (she died childless), her distended form indicates a hope – perhaps a plea - for a fruitful union.[256] In this, he shares Linda Seidel's opinion that the painting represents a desired reality, and like Seidel, he is persuaded that the detail and realism of the interior faithfully report the appearance of the merchant's prized chattels in order to represent his courtly ambitions and aristocratic self-image.[257] Seidel says that Van Eyck presents an ideal which melds together what is real with what is desired in a vision that 'seek(s) to persuade the viewer that present and future realities can coexist in the same time and space'.[258] The tense that naturalism appears to assume to itself is the 'present', but a 'present' that is documentary, memorial - a halt to the passage of time. In a devotional context, the present anticipates an unfolding in the afterlife, styled by Seidel as a 'future reality' - the way Seidel understands temporality thus, recalls Derrida's work on countersignatures.

Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that unlike Harbison, Seidel expressly integrates the appearance of the signature into her reasoning. She develops her argument through, and in honour of, Panofsky, styling the *Arnolfini Portrait* as a kind of *ricordanze*, a work that commemorates the cumulative ceremonies that were involved in the marital process

256 Ibid. p265
257 Seidel, op. cit.
258 Ibid. p76

rather than depicting the 'one-off' event of a 'clandestine' marriage.[259] In her view, the contractual status of the *Arnolfini Portrait* reflects the hope of the marriage, but more pragmatically is in someway a guarantee against the marital dowry advanced by the bride's family. In attempting to discern for whom the painting was produced, Seidel underscores the importance of complex financial transactions in Medieval marriage. Central to her commentary, she relates that grooms required notarized proof in order to release dowry payments, and she says that the *Arnolfini Portrait* exists as that kind of proof: the painting may have functioned as a kind of 'receipt'.

Seidel notes that Van Eyck began to hold property in Bruges in 1432, (2 years before the date on the *Arnolfini Portrait*), and as a consequence was eligible to act as a witness to ceremonies as a 'community representative'. On these terms, his signature is that of a notary and as such incidental to his role as the artist who 'made' the painting. So, Van Eyck did not sign the painting as an artist, but as a dignatory who happens to have painted what he signs. According to Seidel, on this basis, the signature is an essential element in the painting, not an extraneous or idiosyncratic one. The merchant class in Bruges would have recognized Van Eyck as an artist, but also as a civically important man: signature splits his status. For Seidel, the signature is indicative of civic authority rather than the artist's assertion of personal virtuosity or a Modern authorial self. It works very much in a common sense manner, and her interpretation of the painting proceeds outwards from it.

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[259] A diaristic housekeeping book in which accounts of marriage were narrated (alongside other domestic arrangements and activity). Ibid. p68

In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida briefly considers the *Arnolfini Portrait* in his discussion of the claims Heidegger and Schapiro make to Van Gogh's 'shoes'. Accepting Panofsky's treatment of the painting, he understands Van Eyck's signature to have transformed the representation of a wedding *per fidem* into an 'attestation of marriage'. The fact that the detail of the wedding theories that circulate around the *Arnolfini Portrait* has led to them being discredited on one ground or another is irrelevant: the fact that the painting has (had) this persistent appeal is not. Van Eyck's signature invites readings that interpret the painting as the commemoration of a ceremony, a classic speech act for which a witness is required. If naturalism hides the artist, at the same time it purports to give spectators his eyes and the undisguised signature seems to announce and verify his presence as something not entirely simultaneous with mechanical skill. The signature asks us to fill in and trust what it is a proxy of (what is beyond it), and that is a secular 'being-there', '*être-la*', '*da-sein*', the unseen 'having-been' of an instituted individual.

At the beginning of this Chapter, the conceptual difference between *fecit* and *fuit* was discussed. In artists's inscriptions, *fecit* and *fuit* are associated with *me* and *hic* respectively, and these pronouns also have a relationship to presence. In *Language and Death*, Giorgio Agamben looks at the etymological connections between *da* and *diese* in Greek; *hic*, the adverb of place, and *hic*, the demonstrative pronoun in Latin; *there* and *this* in English.[260] According to Agamben, based on Aristotle's classification of nouns and verbs into discrete categories, (all other words were *sundesmoi*, 'connectives'), pronouns arrive late in language as an autonomous category and when they do, they establish the

[260] Agamben, G. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991) p26 n.1

character of 'indication' (*deixis* in Greek, *demonstratio* in Latin): indication might be understood as a prosthetic operation. Pronouns have a special relationship with the *action* (as opposed to *appearance*) of the 'sign' and a privileged place in thought. In passing, it is worth remarking that if *fuit hic* opens the *Arnolifini Portrait* grammatically onto considerations of the *être-la* of SEC, it also opens it onto Heidegger's *da-sein*, (with the idea that *fuit hic* could register as 'not-here' as well as 'being-there').

Agamben contends that the movement between signifying and indicating (demonstrating) preoccupied Medieval grammarians, who intuited 'two types of presence' - 'one certain and immediate and one in which a *temporal difference* had already insinuated itself'.[261] Thus, pronouns - primarily indicative - function by way of instituting temporal difference and delay, by splitting presence, by substitution. Pronouns, and in particular the pronoun 'I', are structurally implicated in the speech act, always already sited and operating reflexively within discourse: 'Indication is the category within which language refers to its own taking place'.[262] In the *hic* of the *Arnolfini* signature, indication is abyssal. The viewer is directed simultaneously to a past 'here' represented in the image, and a present 'here' - to the occupation of an impossible position, a present 'here' which is doubly occupied by the artist and the viewer. In the *Arnolfini Portrait*, the movement and reflexivity of temporal difference is encapsulated and emphasized in the signatory inscription of a 'proper name' appearing in conjugation with a declaration of 'having been' in front of a scene (as seen) depicted at some point in the past. The pronoun *hic* operates as a vortex, deliberately drawing the viewer to a 'prior' event, a 'prior' place

261 Ibid. p22
262 Ibid. p25

that nevertheless appears before them in versimilitude. The *Arnolfini* signature declares that *this* has *been* seen as much as it has been made and is *being* seen, a double vision that constitutes an authentic testament delivered through the particularity of the artist.

The artist is an individual occupying a role which is linked to the operation of temporality in signature. The particular signature indicates the artwork in the 'past' but the intersection of materiality and spectator look to locate it in a *general maintenance*. When Panofsky introduces the artist as a witness to a sacrament more legal than religious, and the painting is evidenced as a document, the signature appears to constitute the artist's final involvement with the painting, the testament. The implication that the signature marks an act of witness requires that it simultaneously marks an act of completion, but if the signature is not a mark of completion, if it does not attempt to set seal, can it have any persuasion as an act of witness? As previously noted, a witness may be understood to be someone who has been present enough in the totality of an event to verify and report its having taken place; is familiar enough with an individual to make an identification; has experience and reputation enough to be considered an expert, and as an expert is treated as the objective representative of a current body of knowledge at that point in time where witness is given. In all circumstances, the witness is understood to be testifying on the basis of prior experience that is marked as sealed at the time of testimony. Any additions or changes made to a witness's statement must be signed as such otherwise they adulterate and invalidate it. All this gives onto Derrida's word and form play in 'Ltd. Inc a b c…', the 'borrowed names' that appeal to him so much.

The heterogeneous form of the calligraphic signature on the *Arnolfini Portrait* effectively raises the presumption that it was applied separately to the surface of the painting after it was finished. The quality of this presumption institutes a difference between the *Arnolfini* signature and every other signature attributed to Van Eyck. It declares a shift from the involvement of the artist principally in the processes of object production to involvement in generating documentary testimony. Ironically, read through Derrida, rather than marking completion, the *Arnolfini* inscription, with its special emphasis on presence over production, reflects the impossibility of signature's ability to do this. Van Eyck's marbled frames illustrate a literal displacement of material which can be read as a step towards dematerialisation and the *Arnolfini* signature can be read as a significant statement alluding to the emergence and dominance of the artist over the object.

5. SIGNATURE AS PROPERTY: *THIS IS MINE*

5.1 DONOR INSCRIPTIONS: THE ARTIST AS A FUSED FIGURE

In the preceding Chapter, the idea that Van Eyck's signatory practice might be taken to represent a shift in which the artist emerges against the object is contingent on the pre-existence of circumstances in which the object was venerated over the artist. When the production of images and statues was circumscribed by religious edicts, as it was in Byzantine culture, the integrity of the object was dependent upon a secure typology of form that distanced it from any individual originator. In the nexus of relationships that convenes in a Byzantine icon, the intimate, physical connection between the person responsible for direct manufacture of the object is not figured as the most important one. This is not to say that the direct and variable influence of individuals on the realization of icons is not relevant. Despite the tradition of *acheiropoieta*, Byzantine icons occasionally identify by name individuals that can be said to have facilitated their existence, even if those individuals – as donors who endowed their production - were not engaged in physically manufacturing them. For example, the 7th century *Icon of St Irene*, at the Holy Monastery of St Catherine in Sinai, identifies by name, a donor, 'Nicholas (Sab)atianos',

who is depicted as a tiny figure prostrate before the giant, unresponsive saint 'Irene' (an historical figure, also named in the inscription).[263]

Where the donor is identified, an icon might testify to a penitent relationship between the donor and the saint, which is an indirect relationship between the donor and God geared towards securing salvation for the donor. The relationship between the donor and the saint is hierarchical: the canon of saints is a litany that includes those historical individuals who, having lived 'ethically' and served the interests of the church and court, were officially recognized and monumentalized in death.[264] The icon might not identify an individual artisan's involvement in manufacture, but it cannot be said to be 'unsigned'. It carries the name of someone responsible for bringing about its existence, albeit at a degree of remove from physical manufacture. Hans Belting refers to the image of Nicholas (Sab)atianos in the icon of St Irene as 'a visual signature': the icon is only unsigned in the sense that the attribution of credit for manual production is missing.[265]

So, despite there being no necessary physical contact between the icon and the donor, who is named (credited) and portrayed by an uncredited third party, can it be said that the indication of the donor by name 'signs' the icon? Where the signature is supposed to be a guarantee of presence, a guarantee of 'having-been', what is the nature of that presence or 'having-been'? Can 'presence' travel esoterically through the representation of the

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263 Patterson-Sevcenko, N. 'The Representation of Donors and Holy Figures on four Byzantine Icons' *Ahona* (1994) p158

264 Belting, op. cit. p256; Ratcliff, B & Evans, H. C. (edts.) *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th-9th Century* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012) p57

265 Belting, ibid.

donor's name in order to secure spiritual benefits for himself and his family, or does the notion of presence in an object necessarily rely on (volitional) manual contact in the process of production? Derrida does not theorize a necessary difference. The idea that a presence can flow through (and be guaranteed by) contingent circumstances that are external to the body of the donor - a determined representation, a name who is thus 'signed' - rather than purely through gestures generated by the hand of a maker, is a construction of signature that is implied in both the etymology of signature and in the mechanistic way Derrida envisages signature operating. All that changes between an autograph and a seal, for example, is the emphasis on one empirical method or another: the hand of the individual or the control of an instrument at a degree of remove from the hand. The method of signing might have an impact on the legibility and authority of the signature in various contexts at various times, but there is no essential difference between gesture, autograph or stamp because, for Derrida, signature only becomes effective through countersignature. The depiction of Nicholas Sabatianos is not autographic, nor does it result from the impression of a singular tool, but it is not without an authority that assumes it can channel Divine favour to the right individual i.e. to 'Nicholas Sabatianos'. Furthermore, the icon represents and identifies Nicholas Sabatianos in what aspires to be an ongoing act of piety and devotion: in Derridean terms, it could be said to aspire to an (impossible) *general maintenance* designed to assure salvation, and of course Derrida's choice of *parousia* to describe the operation of signature in 'Restitutions' hints at signature's quasi-theological mode.

In the *Icon of St Irene*, the figure of Nicholas Sabatianos is indicated proximate to his name, and the main reason for citing the *Icon of St Irene* at the start of this Chapter is to bring it into proximity to those structures through which artists came to apply their own names as signatures on their works. It is an example that is intended to advance the notion that one of the relevant precedents for what are commonly recognized as artists's signatures are those inscriptions recognizing donors. Donors, like artists, can be recognised as having been involved in the production of paintings and sculptures as 'orchestrators'. The place of the donor in Byzantine and Early Renaissance art indicates the variability of the roles connected with operating as an 'artist'. When Ambrose Lorenzetti decorated the Sala della Pace in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena with *Allegories of Good and Bad Government* (c.1338-39) in the 14th century – including his signature in the process - to what extent is he behaving as an orchestrator and to what extent as an artist?[266] Not only did Lorenzetti run a workshop - so it is highly unlikely that he would have been responsible for every physical effect in realizing the work - he is documented as being very actively involved in the civic affairs of the city. Is his signature that of an artist, that of a workshop owner, of a civic figure (and donor); any, all, some or one? Likewise, to what extent does Seidel read Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* signature as that of an artist, and to what extent as that of a burgess? If we accept that signature allows (necessitates) the co-mingling of roles (and individuals), what does that mean for where we find the artist in history and how we might read signatory inscriptions on a continuum rather starting with individual 'creativity' during the Renaissance?

[266] Barker, Webb & Woods, op. cit. pp32-55

5.1.1 LOCATING THE ARTIST AFTER DUCHAMP

While Nicholas Sabatianos may have directed production of the icon, requiring that he and his name was recorded on it, despite the paradigmatic shifts in critical thinking about art practice since Duchamp, art history has had a general tendency to view the 'anonymous' manual worker who painted the icon as the 'proto-artist' and not the orchestrating donor who faciliated its production. This is largely because the idea of visual art has been driven by a view of it as something that is expressed in a manually produced, autonomous entity - 'the work of art'. Post-Duchamp, (and informed by the theorising of Relational Art), is it not possible to read 'orchestration' as a function of artistic practice and look for evidence of that in historical examples? This changes where the artist or proto-artist can be located in history. Recent art histories dissimulate tendencies to read the artist in the shadow of Romantic ideals as a self-contained genius directly (manually) involved in all 'moments of production'. Even so, there is a lack of work seeking to specifically synthesize the legacy of the donor with that of the artisan. Is there not a case for seeing the artist as a 'fused figure' who can occupy the place of either/both the donor and artisan in history, (meaning that donor signatures are significant in the genealogy of the artist)?

It is my contention that the donor is as necessary in the figuration of the 'proto-artist' as the artisan and this is permitted when the artist - as a function - is viewed with a post-Duchampian model of what that might be in mind, rather than a Romantic or Modernist one. Duchamp was implicitly involved in taking apart the structural legacies that have

contributed to making up 'the artist', and these legacies are not just found in the Readymade's immediate 19th century predecessors. Despite its 19th century form, the signature 'R. Mutt' on *Fountain* necessarily engages a long, complicated history of art production that extends beyond the Renaissance through the Byzantine era to Antiquity.

5.1.2 SIGNATURE AS AN INTERTEXTUAL ELEMENT IN ANTIQUITY

There is perhaps support for this in the work of Robin Osbourne who, having surveyed the signatory habits of potters and vessel-painters in Ancient Greece, concludes that signatures point to a notion of 'authored' 'fine arts' existing in antiquity: 'Artists are continually born in the collaboration of artist and patron'.[267] Osbourne makes a distinction between signatures, (on pots, gemstones and sculptures), and stamps, (on tiles and bricks), on the basis of their function, and he cautions against imputing a hierarchical reading of signature that suppresses the notion of 'the craftsman in our terms'. In relation to the Derridean conception of signature, the distinction between stamp and signature is empirical because they perform in the same way, however, Osbourne's paper disrupts a foundational notion in art history, namely that there was no such thing as 'art', 'artists' or 'originality' in Antiquity, indeed at anytime before these concepts were born in the Renaissance.[268] Through the close quantitative and qualitative analysis of signatures - 'the

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[267] Osbourne, R. 'The Art of Signing in Ancient Greece', (Spring 2010), *Arethusa,* Vol. 43, No. 2, Spring 2010, p249

[268] Ibid. p236: 'I focus on signatures because not only have signatures come to be associated with claims to originality, but there is good reason to think that signatures

ways in which painters and sculptors identify themselves' - he argues that objects bearing signatures are acts of communication whose intertextuality points to their (collaborative) authoring.

The signature of the potter or painter is part of that act of communication which constitutes a work of art. Signatures are not 'adjunct' to decoration but integral components of pictorial schema that consciously and essentially allow the object to 'perform'. For drinking vessels (e.g. kylikes) which, within the set of pots that are signed, are frequently indicated, the role of signatory inscriptions is well-defined:

> You could not come to perform at the symposium without the equipment that the potter and painter provided. Sympotic performance was an act in which the potter and painter were complicit…[269]

Osbourne notes that the signatures of sculptors in dedicatory inscriptions are generally separated from the body of the statue and appear on the base or plinth, this:

> …makes the sculptor more than just adjunct to the patron…it also turns the inscribed base from merely a utilitarian text to being itself a work of art: the reader is made to think about the place and size of the words, not just about their content. The 'balance' of sculptor and dedicator raises the question of their relative part in communication that is signaled, and ensures that in these presentations to the gods, representation - of dedicator, of man, god, or hero portrayed, and sculptor - is always at issue.[270]

He concludes that using signature to search for the 'rise' of the artist (out of a class of artisans) is futile because those behaving as artists, those who are engaged in directing

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already conveyed such claims in antiquity. Since the claim to originality has regularly been denied to ancient artists, the signature is a good foundation on which to build.'

[269] Ibid. p245

[270] Ibid. p247

performance and using their signature as an intertextual element in this activity, have, quite simply, always signed their work. This is not to say that the function of the artist or artisan had not undergone changes; rather, it is to say that the function has never been defined purely by material manipulations. Signature is indicative of role-variablity.

There are many intervening centuries between the art considered by Osbourne and the icon of St Irene, and the icon does not anywhere indicate a named painter. However, if dedicatory and signatory inscriptions can be considered to point to an 'artistic' authorship in Antiquity, might the same be said for dedicatory and signatory inscriptions on Byzantine icons where a painter is not indicated by name but a donor is? If we consider donors to have played a part in structuring icons, are those that bear their names 'signed'? If authorship is intertextual, is anything compromised in emphasizing the separation of donor from painter, a separation that is effected by styling the icons as 'anonymous' productions? If we accept Osbourne's evidence that the role of the artist in Antiquity involves directing 'performance' through the production and use of objects, and such a direction is indicated by the way in which signatures and signatory inscriptions are used, what does the use of signatory inscriptions *per se* (i.e. including those that do not name the manufacturing individuals) mean for what is considered to be an artwork and who/what is considered an artist? Might signature and signatory inscriptions be aids to understanding the roles and functions that artists have, as 'fused figures', performed throughout history, (i.e. not just since the Renaissance)? There is a strong case for understanding all signatory inscriptions as the point of intermixing along the lines of Derrida's 'Sarl' formulation – a *société plus ou moins anonyme* '3 + n'. Tracing the

personalities and roles which, for any given work at any given time, filter through 'Sarl' result in what and who the artist has been, is and will be. As a fused figure, can the role of the artist ever be said to have proceeded solely on the basis of individual *artisan*ship, or mastery of material and technique?

5.1.3 THE ARISTONOTHOS KRATER

An instructive example can be found on the Aristonothos Krater (Fig. 4), a kylike which dates from approx 650 BC.[271] The signature – '*Aristonothos epoisen'* - is implicated in the representation of a scene from Homeric epic which is depicted on the Krater, (this scene is also reputedly the 'first' of its kind). The scene shows Odysseus blinding the Cyclops, Polyphemus, having procured his drunkenness. Vedia Izzet observes that the artist's name 'Aristonothos' is inscribed at the very centre of the Cyclops narrative - almost as an extension of the burning ember used to injure Polyphemus:

> the point at which the onomastic inscription is inserted is that at which Odysseus's namelessness is crucial for the outcome of the story. The scene of myth into which Aristonothos writes his name is one in which names deceive and cannot be taken at face value. When Odysseus gives his name to the barbarian Cyclops, the latter, not being

[271] A Krater from Pithekoussai with a *partial* signature is thought to be earlier: Bennett, Michael J., Aaron J. Paul, Mario Iozzo, and Bruce White *Magna Graecia: Greek art from south Italy and Sicily*. (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2002) p27

> Greek, thinks it is a real name. When precisely at the same point, the painter gives us, or his Etruscan client, his name, we too believe him.[272]

She casts doubt on the veracity of the name 'Aristonothos', breaking it into its component parts *aristo* and *nothos*, translating them respectively as 'noble' and 'bastard' and suggests that the supposed signature has a satricial edge. Similarly, for Seth D Pevnick, who styles 'Aristonothos' a 'loaded name':

> …given the uniqueness of the name "Aristonothos", not only as an artist signature, but also in the entire body of Greek inscriptions and personal names, one wonders whether it may not have been invented by the artist as a sort of visual pun – just as Odysseus deceives the Cyclops with his invented name, so too may the artist here be deceiving us….In seeking an answer to the question "Who is Aristonothos?" the user(s) of the pot must also have been forced to ask important questions about the mythical meaning and cultural identity within the complex mix of Greek and Etruscan populations found in 7th century Etruria. In many ways, the meaning would be greatly diminished if the user of the pot actually knew the artist, and if the artist's actual name was Aristonothos.[273]

So, not only is the signature of Aristonothos the earliest signature yet recorded, it is, typically for an artefact of its type, a singular instance of that signature. More significantly, it is apparently a singular instance of the name, 'Aristonothos'. In Ancient Greece, kraters were vessels in which water and wine were mixed for symposia - this function, coupled with the narrative of the illustration and the compound idiosyncracy of the name produces speculation that the signature is a visual pun.

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[272] Izzet, V. 'Purloined Letters: The Aristonothos Inscription and Krater' in Shefton, B.B., and Lomas, K. *Greek identity in the western Mediterranean papers in honour of Brian Shefton*. (Leiden: Brill, 2004) p195

[273] Pevnick, S. 'Loaded Names, Artistic Identity, and Reading an Athenian Vase', *Classical Antiquity*, Vol.29 (2010) Issue 2, p227

Scholarly work on the *Aristonothos Krater* reinforces Osbourne's contention that signatures point to performative, artistic self-consciousness. Signatures don't appear to have had a straight-edged function on Greek pots, and it is perhaps possible to see the 'dehiscence' that Derrida describes operating clearly through them. There are, for instance, rare cases in which pottery carries two *epoiesen* signatures (band cups by Nikosthenes and Anakles; by Archikles and Glaukytes) - such signatures are thought to refer to partners in workshop ownership; to express a transfer of ownership at some level, or, as Matthew Robertson speculates:

> They might even be jokes: a bored painter putting names of any two of his companions to confuse the poor Etruscan who would be buying the cup. Indeed, jokes apart, are we perhaps trying to discern in the signatures on Greek vases a rationale which is not there? One starts with the expectation that there will have been some purpose in signing a vase; but a definable purpose would surely leave a detectable pattern and the signing practice on Greek pottery seems entirely haphazard….there might have been some commercial motive for the signature; but had it been so one would expect the usage to have been much more general and consistent.[274]

Here, in brief, the signature - taken to be so consistent, coherent and expressive; direct and permanent - is found to be slippery, problematic, confusing and interruptive of expected logic. Scholars like Beazley dismissed signatures on Greek pots as the 'least important' aspect of them because they provide unreliable witness and were thought to evidence subjective whim.

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[274] Robertson, M. 'Epoiesen on Greek Vases: Other Considerations', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol.92 (1972) p182

5.1.4 CONFUSION & ROLE-VARIABILITY

Signature indicates role variability in a different way. Not infrequently in art historical analyses of objects and images, confusions that arise when the purpose and character of names appearing in inscriptions is unclear. For example, the 'pre-Byzantine' mummy portraits associated with the Faiyum basin in Egypt are 'unsigned'. Exceptionally, one of the Faiyum portraits in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, *Portrait of the Boy Eutyches*, carries an anomalous inscription painted into the yoke of the subject's garment:

> the boy's name ('Eutyches, freedman of Kasanios') seems indisputable: then follows either 'son of Herakleides Evandros' or 'Herakleides, son of Evandros'. It is also unclear whether the 'I signed' at the end of the inscription refers to the painter or the portrait or to the manumission (act of freeing a slave) that would have been witnessed by Herakleides or Evandros. An artist's signature would be unique in mummy portraits.[275]

The fact that it should be unclear as to whether Herakleides/Evandros was the witness to an event, (which itself stands in close relation to the notion of a 'speech act'), or was the artist who painted the portrait of Eutyches neatly illustrates the dilemma. Depending on the locus of the power assigned to Herakleides/Evadnros, 'I signed' might refer to making, (if the 'artist' is empowered and delimited by making); to witnessing, or to both simultaneously. Similarly, in the celebrated case of 'Gislebertus' at the Cathedral of Autun, there have been a series of confusions over who Gislebertus was, why his name appears and what he did - was he donor, sculptor or architect? If it can't be decided

[275] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2000 – 2013) *Portrait of the Boy Euytches* http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/100004780 (accessed 26th March 2013).

whether the name 'signed' is that of an artist or a donor, it suggests that there is a degree of shared involvement in the process of signing, (so signature cannot, as Austin suggests, tether to source - there is no source that is entire or intact). When the artist is read critically and primarily as the descendent of individuated artisans who 'make', it is easy to overlook or forget the interplay of social inheritances that have contributed to the development of the role and rgar the formation of the 'artist' includes the non-physical acts of witnesses and donors as well as artisans. Examining the functional history of signatures provides a way to understand this.

5.2 COLLECTING UNDER A SINGULAR SIGNATURE

5.2.1 GISLEBERTUS

If the signature on the *Portrait of the Boy Eutyches* alludes to an immanent confusion or symbiosis between artists and witnesses, the celebrated signature of Gislebertus on the tympanum of the 12th century Cathedral of St Lazare at Autun (Fig. 5) concerns a historically determined confusion about whether the presence of a signature testfies to the involvement of an artist or a donor. These contestations illustrate the possibility that the name attested to on the Cathedral's stone sculptures could be that of a donor which history has overwritten as that of an artist. Such an overwriting is contingent: when the figure of the artist is seen to be more important than the figure of the donor, in 'hard'

cases where the nature of the signature is ambiguous - as it is at Autun - the art historical tendency has been to construct the signature as that of an individual maker. The conventional lineage for the artist is then styled as a primarily anonymous artisanal heritage which is 'reborn' as the basis for the individuated, 'creative' artist. In conventional art histories, locating and naming the individual artist has been the guiding condition of the enquiry. Creativity is actively sought and located in an artist when readings of the physical evidence construe work as both exceptional and consistent, and this is what happened with the signature of Gislebertus, ('exception' and 'consistency' echo the masking assumption and operative function that Derrida figures in signature). This historically determined presumption in favour of the artist is true even for studies of signature that purport to be 'scientific' and proceed ahistorically. In his semiotic study of signatures, Gandelman, who styles the signature of Gislebertus as 'non-indexical' name, accepts without question the status of Gislebertus as 'the artist who carved the marvellous sculptures of the portal'.[276] In this, he follows a tradition of art historical scholarship that has, since the 19th century, recovered Gislebertus as an 'artist'.

The signatory inscription at Autun reads *'Gislebertus hoc fecit'*. It appears sandwiched between statements that refer to, and reinforce, the visual subjects of the tympanum which is concerned with themes of judgment and resurrection. Having been hidden for many years, it was uncovered in the mid-19th century after the removal of some 18th century plaster.[277] The inscriptions were translated at this time by Abbé Devoucoux, a priest attached to the Cathedral, and the name 'Gislebertus' was accepted as that of a

[276] Gandelman, op. cit. p75

[277] See Ross, L. *Artists of the Middle Ages*, Greenwood Press, (2003), pp18-19

sculptor.[278] The specificity of the time here is significant – the tendency to search for stylistic consistency in the carvings as the work of an individual 'talent', and to read the name as that of an artist, was in line with the priorities and conceptual assumptions of contemporaneous art historical connoisseurship. In the 1960s, Denis Grivot and George Zarnecki, a choirmaster at the cathedral and an art historian respectively, published an influential study – *Gislebertus, sculpteur d'Autun* – in which they restated the case for considering a group of carvings, which apparently bore strong stylistic similarities, as the work of one master: 'Gislebertus'. Subsequently, André Malraux, the French Minister for Cultural Affairs at the time, labeled Gislebertus a 'Romanesque Cezanne'.[279] Elizabeth M.Polley, writing in *Artforum* in 1963, following an exhibition associated with Grivot and Zarnecki's work, described the signature of Gislebertus as 'self-glorifying': Gislebertus is marked as a self-aware creator.[280]

Considering the case of Gislebertus at Autun, Leslie Ross comments:

> many scholars have interpreted the inscription which names [Gislebertus] at Autun to be an indication of his so-called authorship of the work, whereas other scholars have argued that [Gislebertus] may not be the name of the artist but rather the name of an important patron of the church…the debates about this issue continue to the present day and primarily evolve from the fact that in general, very little biographical or documentary evidence exists about the majority of named or anonymous medieval artists. In other

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278 See Seidel, L. *Legends in Limestone: Lazarus, Gislebertus and the Cathedral of Autun*, University of Chicago, (1999), p7

279 Anon., 'Art: Romanesque Cezanne' *Time*, Vol. LXXVII No. 10 (3rd March 1961) http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,897696,00.html, (accessed 13th March 2013)

280 Polley, E. M. 'The sculptor of Autun' *Artforum* (February 1963), pp23-6

> words, we have no information at all about Gislebertus (as an artist) apart from his name on the tympanum at Autun.[281]

In *Legends in Limestone*, Seidel considers those claims that work to establish Gislebertus as an artist alongside historic claims and indications designed to establish the presence of relics belonging to St Lazarus on site at Autun. That the 'fixity' of the guarantee promised by signatory inscriptions should reveal ambiguity in the context of Cathedral sculptures dedicated to honoring a biblical figure whose resurrection not only prefigures that of Christ, but leaves an empty tomb - an empty monument, an enigmatic paraph - is aptly 'Derridean'. Lazarus is 'undead', brought back to life, in-between, neither one thing nor the other, just like signature itself.

Seidel contends that the peculiarity of the 'Gislebertus' signature has concentrated studies of the building on the recovery of one great, artistic individual personality rather than on the nature of the 'architectural ensemble': no comparable cathedral has such a signature 'signatory' inscription, so it is seen to represent some kind of beacon illuminating the Dark Ages. In noting this, she repeats the criticism Panofsky makes of the *Arnolfini* signature - that it attracts undue attention, and overshadows everything else. The fact that the signature should exert such a gravitational pull is itself significant. The signature, appears under the feet of the figure of Christ, who is enclosed in a 'medallion-like motif':

> (It) calls to mind the shallow modeling and discrete imagery of contemporary seals, wax impressions of which were attached to medieval charters as signs of an individual's authority. Such miniature reliefs provided guarantees of the authenticity of documents by attesting to the presence of key witnesses at a given act. As legal instruments, seals

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[281] Ross, op. cit. p19

> straddle the boundaries between civil functions and clerical activities. The seal-like allusion of the Autun Christ would have reminded contemporaries that judgment was part of both spiritual *and* worldy realms.[282]

Seidel's reference to 'seals' is augmented with pictorial illustrations that emphasize the commonality of form she perceives between them and the Autun tympanum as a signature for the building. Her interest in linking 'artistic' signatures to legal instruments, which also informs her work on the *Arnolfini Portrait*, is in evidence. Rubin calls to attention the common ground connecting seals to coins in the context of establishing a history for artists's signatures as 'signposts of invention'.[283] The intimate and intricate connections between signatures, seals and coins which involve authority, religion, finance as well as issues of faith and trust, are embedded in Medieval culture and constitute a field of enquiry in themselves.

Seidel's reading of the Autun tympanum depicts 'Gislebertus' not as the simple signature of an individual sculptor, but as a complex, polymanual, plurivocal point of collection for the whole building: she demonstrates signature working in a Derridean manner. In the Cathedral's architectural and symbolic scheme, the name 'Gislebertus' is one element. She suggests, for example, that its appearance in a 'stone charter' at Autun could be part of 'the eponymic strategy of medieval ancestor remembrance' which was designed to give credence to the building and the relics it purported to hold.[284] Seidel says that those academic treatments of the signature at Autun that treat it as an artist's signature do not take sufficient account of the breadth of conventions associated with Medieval naming

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282 Seidel, op. cit. p11-12
283 Rubin, op. cit.
284 Ibid. p15.

practices which included affiliating dynasties and donations with 'future' descendents by way of inscription, (again, the Derridean aspects of this are difficult to ignore). She also says that records of events, (specifically mentioning the consecration of buildings), often occurred 'in conjunction with the arrival of the important individuals whose names would figure prominently in the written record of the event' and that in these circumstances, artisans and laborers are much less prominent where they are not undocumented altogether.[285]Reading Gislebertus as a 'sculptor' is nothing more than a 'romantic conjecture' that relies on modern conventions of what a signature is and does. In Seidel's opinion, Gislebertus was a donor whose relevance cannot be extricated from the production of the building by an ensemble, not an artisan whose physical trace is evidenced in a coherent, stylistic hand. The inscription which names him is located in a sculptural tympanum that acts as a signature for the whole building. As a signature, the tympanum specifies the particularity of the building including the benefits and donations which brought it into existence as well as providing a general indication of its 'holy' character. The appearance of the legend *Gislebertus hoc fecit* within the Cathedral's tympana can be figured as a signature within a signature, a *mise en abyme*.

5.2.2 ACADEMIC INVENTION

The imputations of Grivot and Zarnecki which collect around the signatory inscription at Autun flow from the mainstream of art historical practice at a time when the prevalent

[285] Ibid. p14

ideology sought to recover, classify and construct individual artists. The art historical method of Beazley is also interesting to consider in relation to the instrumental, academic construction of signature. As already mentioned, Beazley dismissed signatures as the least important things on the Greek pots he studied. A few Greek potters are known by name via the signatures they applied to artefacts, but the majority of pots are unsigned and attributed to stylistically derived, but otherwise 'unknown', artists: for example, the so-called 'Berlin Painter'.[286] Beazley, who established the Berlin Painter, studied unsigned vases by tracing drawings directly from pottery and overlaying the tracings on each other in order to compare figures and lines.[287] Essentially, he constructed unified 'signatures' from his tracings and his method is typical of the type of scientific or analytical attribution that characterised the late 19th century art history.[288] The influence of Darwinian taxonomical 'typologies', (of natural history, in fact), is clear in his approach and their role is related to that which Smith sees naturalism playing in the Renaissance generation of scientific epistemology. For Beazley, art studies and archaeology should follow scientific lines of enquiry and practice rather than establish them. Beazley's labels have crystallized into 'official' names denoting single artistic entities whose stylistic particularities determine them and his method, with its reliance on tracing, necessarily privileges iconography as the measurable trace of hand (thus, the

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286 At least 33 vases are attributed to this painter, see: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifactBrowser?redirect=true&object=Vase&field=Painter&value=Berlin+Painter, (accessed 11th September, 2013)

287 Beazley Archive, http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/archive/history.htm (accessed 19th September 2013)

288 Beazley's method contrasts with the method of older German scholars (eg Adolf Furtwängler) who tended to focus on 'high qulaity signed vases with inscriptions, especially signatures of painters': Beazley Archive, https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/tools/pottery/collection/johnbeazley.htm (accessed 19th September 2013)

work of the painter is preferred over that of the potter). Signature is sought as stylistic consistency over a series of artefacts and fragments.

Pevnick states that Beazley's professed dismissal of 'names' as the 'least important thing about an artist' was methodologically important for him because 'by grouping vases on the basis of internal stylistic consistency, he ensured the coherence of his attributions.'[289] Beazley wanted to assert his name, his signature, pre-eminently and names were problematic because they could potentially evidence a particularity that did not conform to his research. The irregularity and apparent unpredictability of signatures troubled Beazley and he accounted for inconsistency in signatory practice in terms of the unstable personal preference of the artist, whose mood, temperament and compliance to 'fashion' underlay the decision as to whether or not the artefact was signed. Inconsistency and 'unreliability' accompany written signatures on Greek Pottery, as does the incidence of name-squatting (the term is used in preference to 'forgery' or 'counterfeiting'):

> Neer gives the example of the Triptolemos Painter, 'the ancient forger', who twice signed as Douris despite not painting in a true 'Dourian' style. To this we might add the complicated case of the name 'Polygnotos', famously borne by the celebrated wall-painter of Thasos, this name is also signed on pots attributed to 3 different hands – Polygnotos, the Lewis Painter (Polygnotos II) and the Nausicaa Painter. [290]

Here the unstable signature is problematic for objective categorisation, although, according to Pevnick, a growing field of scholarship in the area operates to bring a modicum of consistency to that which Beazley found so irregular. Signatures are

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289 Pevnick, op. cit. p223

290 Ibid. p228

bothersome and irregular when they are taken to indicate a stable, creative individual. When that imperative is dropped, they have much more significance. So not only have signatures been understood to occupy strategic placements that enhance the interpretation of the iconography, they can be understood to establish a 'marketplace persona' and they can be understood to contain clues to the ethnicity of the signatory.

Like Beazley - and about the same time - the Renaissance specialist Bernard Berenson 'recovered' the Reniassance artists 'Alunno di Domenico' and 'Amico di Sandro'. Writing about Berenson in a biography of the art dealer and Tate benefactor, Sir Joseph Duveen, with whom Berenson had a strategic relationship as adviser, S. N. Behrman says:

> In Amico di Sandro, [Berenson] created an artist who was more consistent, more nearly perfect, more distinctive and more readily recognisable than any actual artist. This human artefact of Berenson's was in itself a work of art; it grew in beauty as, over the years, he increased the man's production. Amico got better and better; he never had a lapse; he seemed immune to the declensions that afflict other artists. His market value in America went up steadily.[291]

As an historian and marketable expert, Berenson valued consistency and distinction. In other words, he valued the core qualities that give signature its paradoxical enigma as a divided seal, (it is simultaneously the same and unique). Behrman recounts that whilst later documentary evidence proved that the work of 'Alunno di Domenico' could be reattributed to one artist, the 'single hand' of Bartolommeo di Giovanni, the work of

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[291] Behrman, S. N. *Duveen: The Story of the Most Spectacular Dealer of All Time*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953)

'Amico di Sandro', was reattributed to three: Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandio and Filippino Lippi. This reattribution was executed by Berenson himself, who, according to Behrman, felt the artist he had created was too perfect.[292]

5.2.3 ANONYMITY AND THE ST BARTHOLOMEW ALTARPIECE

Using a single name or label aids the cartographic process of colonising history and culture. On this point, Neil McGregor's Walter Neurath lecture *A Victim of Anonymity* in 1993, is instructive.[293] In it, McGregor recalled the discussions about which great artists should be commemorated in inscriptions on the stairwell of the newly instituted Sainsbury Wing. During those discussions, the 'Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece', a 15th century German artist whose only known work is in the National Gallery's collection, was (initially) neglected. McGregor puts this neglect down to the Master's 'anonymity'- which he interpets as the lack of a personal name. He notes that for art produced during the Renaissance, for Northern - specifically German - work, there is a relative dearth of contracts relating to commissions, as well as a lack of signatures on the paintings themselves: 'Most of the paintings are called - in desperation - quite simply after themselves, by what the Germans call a Notname, an emergency name.'[294] As a

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292 Ibid. p94

293 McGregor, N. *A Victim of Anonymity: The Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993)

294 Ibid. p13

result, McGregor suggests that without a 'real name', for the Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece:

> …all kinds of celebrity are precluded. An anonymous artist, however distinguished, cannot enter the pantheons so eagerly constructed in the 19th century….an anonymous artist cannot become a household name. He or she cannot become part of that communal notion of culture so widely shared…[295]

McGregor is of the opinion that because the name of the Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece is impersonal, it prevents the artist being established as a personality and this leads to (his) significance being overlooked. There is, though, no intrinsic reason that an 'impersonal' name or label cannot be established as the signifier of a famous artist - nicknames and names locating the artist instrumentally in superscripted (and in this sense impersonal) geographies, traditions and studios are not infrequent. The names of many Renaissance artists include toponymic references - examples include Andrea da Pontedera, better known as Andrea Pisano, ('Pisano' indicates his assocation with Pisa); Jan Van Eyck, known to Vasari as Giovanni da Bruggia ('da Bruggia' refers to Brussels); Marc' Antonio Bolognese (Bologna), also known as Raimondi and by the surname De' Franci, which was acquired from Francesco Francia as his most 'gifted' pupil. Indeed, as *dynamis* and prosthetic extension, signature parlays personality into 'impersonality' and is observed (in art history) as having a 'trademark' function.

More significant in the constructive anonymity of this Master is the fact that the altarpiece exists without supporting ephemera and is (his) only known work: there are no other works or documents with which to generate an 'internal' countersignature,

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[295] Ibid. p17-18

(comparison to works believed to have been made by the same person or workshop). The 'artist' appears to be coextensive with one unique object. The signatory split indicated by the attachment of the word 'Master' to the altarpiece brings with it the possiblity of figuring its substrate as an 'enigmatic paraph' which the artist-function indicated by 'Master' countersigns. Construing the altarpiece as the work of an artist, rather than as a singular object has certain implications: what 'Master' adds to 'St Bartholomew Altarpiece' is not so much a reflection on the quality of craftsmanship or personality of the artist, nor on the processes of the workshop that produced it, but the potential for future discoveries and attributions that can accumulate under the name, however 'impersonal'. Credited to an artistic entity - faceless though it may be - the painting assumes a penumbra of shadowy others, whether or not they are (still or ever were) extant. Adding 'Master', a human inflection, to 'St Bartholomew Altarpiece' opens a stent to the recovery – physical or otherwise - of what is also assumed to have existed. It adds a degree of Derridean spectrality. As a label complicit in the process of signature - seeming to fix position through a search for others - 'Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece' does not just designate an object but a germinal cultural territory.

One of the important things McGregor brings into focus is the extent to which anonymity is, and has been, both a processual consequence of material practice, (he notes that signatures and paper labels could have been attached to (lost) frames), and a cultural determination. In the course of his text, he partially and incidentally reverses the normal distinction between artist and artisan:

> Because of the unparalleled amplitude of the Sèvres archives, the most minor flower painter at the Sèvres porcelain factory is listed and studied, his biography published and

> his propensity to bad language recorded, while virtually nothing has appeared in English on the artists of Cologne at the end of the 15th C, who are among the greatest painters of their generation in Europe.[296]

Though he reiterates a classic opposition that pits the 'greatest painters of their generation' against the 'most minor flower painter', who seems to be - in McGregor's view - almost unjustly documented, it is interesting to note the importance placed on individual traceability within the context of the Sèvres pottery. If artisans are thought of, and presented as, anonymous, it is not just because there is a lack of documentation to use in recovering artisan individuals, but partly because academic art historical treatments remainder them. Their signatures are styled as less authorial 'maker's marks' – they are seen to lack the expressive capacity that a 'modern' signature indicates and is seen to require. During the Renaissance, specialization in certain forms of craft, (principally panel painting and sculpture), involved the establishment and assignation of 'creativity' and 'originality' to painters and sculptors over artisans engaged in the production of other artefacts (porcelain painters and goldsmiths, for example). If artisans were 'left behind' by artists it was because they were bound to, or dominated by, the materials and techniques demanded by their crafts.

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[296] Ibid. p32

5.2.4 LANDO Di PIETRO

To return to the signature of Giselbertus at Autun. Seidel understands that studies promoting Gilsebertus as a self-aware, self-indicating - if not self-glorifying - artist retrospectively promote an ideological agenda designed to venerate individual 'creativity' in the face of what can be recovered about systems of Medieval thought. One of the reasons that the name at Autun has attracted attention turns on the fact that, dating from the 12th century, it looks like it could be an 'early' signature that anticipates the assertion of pride in personal talent by the 'great artists' of the Renaissance and is thus indicative of a singular 'creative' identity in embryo. The academic methods and desires of Beazley, Berenson and McGregor demonstrate an inclination towards establishing convenient, singular points of collection ('artists' or 'personalities') using epithets they have devised and have a degree of control over: Beazley, especially, re-authors objects in this way. It suits an academic agenda invested in 'the creative individual' to establish signatures as axioms of artistic self-assertion against anonymous craft, because they can be made to look like *prima facie* declarations of pride in creative achievement.

Rubin prefaces her essay, *Signposts of Invention*, with a description of Early Renaissance signatory practice:

> Artists's names were regularly inscribed on the religious works which made up a major part of their production and which could be used as offerings to God… These are like

> subscriptions put on manuscripts by their scribes, they are not to be read as claims to authorship. They are supplications for prayer.[297]

It is only when they are allied to naturalism and invention later in the Renaissance that, according to Rubin, signatures mark authorship as creative, secular and public communication. In Rubin's opinion, when signatures are of a sacramental nature designed to channel Divine favour towards the beseeching individual, (who happens to have made the work), authorship is not involved. However, bearing in mind that personal expression is commonly held to be vital to the narrative of the creative author or artist, the parallel possibility that 'votive' inscriptions have personal and expressive aspects (which might not be 'creative' as is generally understood) is interesting.

For example, the case of Lando di Pietro, cited by Smith in *The Body of the Artisan*, illustrates a collusion between 'votive' practice and technical ambition.[298] A sculpture in wood, Lando's *Crucifixion* (1338) (Fig. 6) was damaged by the bombing of Siena in 1944 and split to reveal two inscriptions inserted by the artist into the head of Christ (Fig. 7):

> One states 'The Lord God made it possible for Landro di Pietro of Siena to carve this crucifix in wood in the similitude of the real Jesus to remind people of the passion of Jesus Christ Son of God, and of the Virgin Mary, therefore you true and holy cross render the said Lando to God'. The prayer asks the Virgin, St John the Evangelist, St John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene and all the saints, 'men and women', to recommend Lando to God. He completes his prayer with the statement 'The year of our Lord 1337 [n.s. 1338] this figure was completed in the similitude of Jesus Christ crucified Son of God the living and true. And it is he one must adore and not this wood'…The second inscription, which

297 Rubin, op. cit. pp566-567
298 Smith, op. cit. pp9-12

> Lando rolled up and placed in Christ's nostril, repeats the date and reads. 'Jesus Christ through your mercy let the soul of Landro di Pietro, who made this crucifix, be recommended.'[299]

Referring to a 16th century text, *De Arte Crucifixi*, Smith says that Lando used naturalism to improve the efficacy of his devotions, in this it is a creative act.[300] However, the apologetic Lando steps back from any creative pride he felt in achieving a 'similitude of Jesus Christ' in wood: the naturalism of the *Crucifixion* is so successful and potentially efficacious, it seems he must declare it in his prayer. The taboos on transgressing the boundary between representation and 'supernatural' artifice, with its long entanglement with deceitful and sacrilegious mimesis, were still in play for Lando. His hidden signature checks these taboos in a move that is at once an admission of artifice and a prayer, an appeal for special recognition as well as a humbling apology. When Lando wrote the letters he stuffed into Christ's head, he engaged in a private act of devotion and confession (personal expression) that was never meant for public display. The circumstances of the signature are markedly different to that of Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* with which it might be seen to share a signatory realism. It is also different from publically available votive inscriptions.[301] What better example of the Phaedrean scroll, a deferred, hidden, heart-felt interruption of presence, than Lando's *Cruxifixion*? Is Lando's votive inscription not a claim on authorship *and* a supplication? It is worth recalling Derrida's insistence that signing is effected through *différance*, the signatory is absent to himself no matter what intent motivates the signature.

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299 Ibid. p10

300 Ibid. p12

301 The practice of making votive signatures was consistent during the Renaissance: see Matthew, L. C. 'The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance pictures', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80 No. 4 (1998) pp.616-48

The example Rubin uses to propogate the difference between creative, authorial signatures and 'subscriptions' is the signatory inscription found on Pacino di Bonaguida's *Crucifixion Polyptych* (1315-1320) which details the name of a donor alongside the only known signature of the artist. Rubin cautions against marking the appearance of Pacino's name as an indication of authorship, stating:

> …such a combination is not uncommon. The votive nature of these work offerings made dates a very important part of recollection and testimonial. These 'signatures' are probably best understood as 'undersigning', and can be related to the collective 'subscription' made by parties putting their name to a document.[302]

Does this mean that the *Polyptych* was not 'authored' (in joint enterprise)? Is an such an intercession necessarily removed from the sphere of authorship? What removes it? The public nature of the declaration? If the signature of Pacino is not to be understood as that of an 'author' marking an individual creative involvement in the realisation of the image, neither can it be differentiated from the signature of the donor by anything other than the empirical attribution of his contribution to generating the physical form of the altarpiece, (Pacino is thought to have run a small workshop, so it is unlikely that he was personally responsible for every element of the manufacture of the work – his signature, therefore, cannot be taken to pertain to his hand). Can the collection of 'undersignings' not also be read against the formula '3 + n' which Derrida expounds in *Ltd Inc*…, making Pacino's signature as effective as 'Sarl'/Searle's? Supplication precedes, or at least humbly modifies, 'invention', and again, the inscription of an artist's name can perhaps be read as having a degree of equivalence with that of a (non-manufacturing) donor.

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[302] Rubin, op. cit. p568

5.3 INVENTION

Invention is a power usually credited to artists in generative opposition to the 'copybook' production of 'anonymous' artisans and icon-painters, thus Rubin uses invention to read Renaissance signatures as essentially different to supplications and subscriptions. If, under historical analysis, the inscription on Pacino's *Crucifixion* suggests that the donor, (indicated as 'Simon Presbytr'), directed the artist to paint the altarpiece in a form that (more or less) adhered to ecclesiastical conventions (i.e. if Pacino is not seen to have 'invented' the painting), despite such a direction and such conventions, the fact remains that the artist's signature is approximately equivalent in form, placement and effect to that of the donor. In this sense Pacino, who was contemporary with Lando, has a similar status before God and before the congregation as does the donor: if, as an artist, he is an artisan (not an 'author'), he is a literate artisan of rank, not 'merely' a hired, directed and anonymous hand. However this equivalence is not an equivalence seen to have been won through 'invention'.

Rubin uses Pacino's *Crucifixion* as a control against which an 'inventive approach' is seen to be demonstrated by Michelangelo, Lippi, Donatello and Titian. For these later artists, 'inventiveness' is characterised by personal boldness, (Michelangelo reputedly caused 'affront' with his signature on the *Pietà*); by reflexive reinscription, (this same signature of Michelangelo paid 'homage' to the signature on *Judith Slaying Holfernes (*c.1450) by Donatello); or by technical mastery and compostional novelty, (on the sculpture of *Judith Slaying Holfernes*, Donatello's signature draws attention to his ability

to make stone embody malleability). Lippi's signature on *The Virgin Mary Adoring the Child (Adoration in the Forest)* (c.1459) is inscribed *trompe l'oeil* on an axe, acting, in Rubin's words as a 'patent' for the unusual and much copied composition. Thus, if Pacino's signature is not triumphantly won through 'invention', what enables it to realise a place on the *Crucifixion*? Is it an equivalence that proceeds on the basis of social status, and if so, how does that affect the view of him as unauthorial? Does his signature indicate a 'bald' ennoblization acquired independently of any emergent virtuosity? In that case, can artists be seen to have been ennobilized (purely or mainly) on the basis of 'talent' or genius, as they are in narratives that descend from the Renaissance?

5.3.1 ARTISANAL SELF-AWARENESS

As epistemological endeavour, invention plays a role in Smith's assessment of the importance of Renaissance naturalism to the emergence of science. When she cites the case of Lando in *The Body of The Artisan*, she does so in the course of setting up a parallel between representational naturalism and artisanal treatises. In comparing the naturalism of Lando's *Crucifix* to 'magical' instructions in *De arte crucifix*, she establishes an intimacy between naturalism and efficacy on which foundation, she argues, experimental science developed.[303] Divinely ordained, Byzantine icons (which historically and culturally precede Lando's *Crucifix*) were considered to be efficacious in terms of the constancy to type they demonstrated. Efficacy is not a quality that is necessarily

[303] Smith, op. cit. p11

described by 'naturalism', however, for Smith, it is the naturalism of Lando's *Crucifix* that provides the 'first angle of access' to use in exploring what 'art making meant to an artisan'. Inventive in terms of its opposition to stylistic formulae, it is naturalism that is the conduit for such meaning. Smith's theory of 'autopic authority' binds naturalism to the precise technical and honest observation of the artist. With the principle of 'autopic authority' in hand, a principle which relies on the notion of a 'documentary signature', Smith assesses the relationship that manually recorded observations and experiments have to the progression of science. She makes the case for considering the growth in individual, artisanal 'self-consciousness' to have been driven by the desire to discover and report, and calls for a revision of the notion that science has been theoretically led from 'above', (that is separate from the practical knowledge derived through experience and the artisanal application of skills).[304]

Smith concentrates on three moments characterized by 'most intense artisanal self-assertion' in collusion with naturalism: 15th century Flanders; the southern German imperial cities in the 16th century; and the 17th century Dutch Republic.[305] Within this set of historical and geographical co-ordinates, she puts the case for considering the emergence of 'a new type of person who began to call himself a new philosopher'.[306] Importantly, she allies this 'new type of person' to the emergence of a new type of artist, and in doing so, she accepts and promotes the idea that the function of the artist is heterogenous. Smith considers the 13th century a time of notable significance in the

304 Ibid. p18
305 Ibid. p8
306 Ibid. p20

development of the artist on account of a growing 'self-assertion', which she interprets as a *general* awareness of (personal) value, determined economically, epistemologically, culturally and socially, rather than as an assertion of artistic pride and achievement. To some extent, in this respect, she reiterates what Camille says, and she identifies the 13th century as a time when there was an increasing emphasis placed on the worth of an artwork for the artistic skill it displayed rather than on the cost of its materials. So, for Smith, the acquisition and practice of skill is intimately connected to the development of proto-virtuosic difference and individuation, a connection generated in and reflected by naturalistic representation. Naturalism began to characterize the work of panel painters like Van Eyck because representational activity was directed by the desire to imitate ('invent') nature and not by the necessity of reproducing circumscribed iconographic styles. The locus of the 'model' in naturalism is 'real life' (to be determined volitionally by the 'intact' individual) not 'pattern' (fixed according to social institutions, rules and customs).

5.3.2 THE ANXIETY OF ORIGINALS

Somewhat differently, Christopher S. Wood looks at the production of Medieval art in terms of substitutionality. The thrust of his argument is that in Medieval culture, the class of artefacts that transmogrified into modern artworks were mutually substitutional. In other words, within a broadly defined 'chain of referential artefacts', one similar thing could very much stand in for another similar thing without any loss of referential

capacity, thus the act of 'copying' was looser in Medieval culture than it was subsequently. More importantly, copying was not predicated on the anxiety of originals, an anxiety which is related to historicity: history renders the object 'non-fungible'. Wood believes that the technology of print reproduction tightened the scope of copying by notionally permitting 'perfect exchangeability' on a symmetrical like-for-like basis. This had the consequence of acknowledging the non-fungibile exception of an original as the print's other: 'The concept of the original only comes into focus through the lens of its opposite, the perfect replica.'[307] According to Wood, it was the transitional substitutionality of the print edition that allowed the notion of the non-substitutional, authored original to emerge. The paradox for signature is that a device which functioned to guarantee a 'forgery' - a second-hand image - became a device to signify what was 'authentic' (notionally 'first'). It is perhaps possible to argue that in relation to prints, the habits that lead to authorship 'emerge' prosaically, from the pragmatic demands of material culture. Goldsmiths, whose skill in working metal led their involvement with engraving plates for prints, marked their work in order to verify the integrity of the material, so the possibility that engraved plates carried monograms largely because goldsmiths routinely marked their work cannot be ignored, and the reason goldsmiths' work carries monograms is to guarantee material quality.

The Derridean signature - as lowest common denominator authorship, (an *aide-memoire*) - seems to allow for the emergence of 'authorship' from print culture at a low level, as an unthought transfer of habit. With this in mind, it is possible to see artisanal 'self-

[307] Ibid. pp16-17

assertion' as a deviation from singularity which results in dispensible or replaceable artefacts. Thus signature (if it marks self-assertion) is predicated on an anxiety of originals. As such, it links with Battersby's conception of genius as the principle of a neurotic 'regal' male, who, urbanized, must attempt to embody and guarantee the hereditary *genius* which has been dislocated and moved from place. Signature is used in attempts to address the anxiety which accompanies originals because it appears to permit the assertion that the (dislocated) signatory can be bound and conform to a deviant orignating source (which is not evident in the typology of the object/image).

5.3.3 SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

There is a further caveat to bear in mind reading Smith's account of artisanship, and it relates to a confusion between 'self-assertion' and 'self-consciousness'. The quality of being 'self-conscious' does not necessarily emerge with naturalism or individuation, although that assumption is often taken for granted. It is difficult to sustain the notion that the iconographic artisan is any less self-conscious or aware (of what the representational activity is designed to achieve) because naturalism is not the organizing idiom and the individual is not 'signed'. Indeed, when issues of religious faith are involved, perhaps the reverse is true. Smith says that artisans were 'forced' to become self-conscious, 'to make explicit claims for their skill and power' by the changing nature of commerce.[308] She says that panel painters asserted confidence in, and awareness of, their personal 'unique' skill

[308] Ibid. p32

with a signature, using the signature in conjunction with naturalism to make a link between 'artistic' self-consciousness, epistemological endeavour and self-motivated individuation.[309]

This link ought not to be naturalized. Signature, individuation and artisanal self-consciousness do not necessarily have to be yoked together: Camille's work shows that self-consciousness can be indicated as a social or 'class' phenomenon. Like Camille, Smith believes that the opportunities for free trade beyond guilds (tacitly, beyond monasteries and churches also) were a necessary circumstance for developing artisanal self-consciousness. Unlike Camille, who traces an emergent self-consciousness in the work of medieval illuminators through work in which they identify themselves with (other) socially marginalized people (beggars, prostitutes), Smith thoroughly integrates self-consciousness with competition for patronage. Camille does not figure self-consciousness as the result of (pre-Capitalist) 'aspiration' as does Smith. Camille's work demonstrates that self-consciousness does not necessarily equate to individuation, complicating the picture for theorists who look to signature for the tracks of the artist emerging as an autonomous creative individual.

Both Camille and Smith remark on the importance of the written word in catalysing change round about the 13th century in a culture that had been, to that time, predominantly oral. Again referring to 'intense artisanal self-awareness', Smith says that, with reference to the Early Renaissance, 'the number of artisans who combined craft with

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309 Ibid. p41

authorship at this time is striking'.[310] She strikes up a sympathy between these two types of artisanal behaviour - naturalistic representation and the production of written treatises - and it is interesting to note that the treatises are described as the result of 'authorship', (a term debarred by Rubin even for later paintings). Smith discusses Cennino Cennini's *Il Libero Dell'Arte*, a manual for painters written in the 14th century, in association with the interest in nature of the Carrara family in Padua who were Cennini's patrons.[311] She says:

> Cennini's treatise signals both a self-aware artist concerned with justifying the mechanical arts and a potent interest in nature at the Carrara court: which was undoubtedly related to their own precarious and 'unnatural' hold on power. The Carrara family had risen through the communal government of the city, from which they had subsequently seized power, with the result that they possessed political legitimacy neither from pope nor emperor. Instead, they based their authority on the language of the jurists at the university in Padua who claimed that government must imitate nature.[312]

The implication is that self-awareness and an expanded notion of naturalism (including an interest in what was to become 'natural history') were linked in the Early Renaissance to the wresting of political power from established lines of inheritance. In this respect, if we do accept Smith's contention that the (effective) signature is a mark denoting both artisanal self-consciousness and naturalistic representation, it is simultaneously a mark of political interruption and ambition, rather than ('autonomous') 'creativity'. 'Science' relegates metaphysical authority, which passes ecclesiastically or regally - thus avoiding 'nature' - in the face of an apparent objectivity. If it is politically contrived, Cennini's

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310 Ibid. p32

311 The title of *Il Libero Dell'Arte* is translated into English as *The Craftsman's Handbook*

312 Ibid. pp34-35

artisanal 'self-awareness' (bolstering, if not serving, the Carrara family's position) is not generated purely by an internal or personal satisfaction with the mastering of naturalistic representation.

5.3.4 RING-FENCED KNOWLEDGE

Cennini's book is a technical manual and the etymological relevance of 'manual' is obvious. In the preface to her translation of *Il Libero dell'Arte*, Christina J Herringham, locates it within a technical history that stretches back to Theophratus in the fourth century BC, and includes, as precedents and parallels Russian *podlinniki*, (manuals of painting relating to the production of icons); the Roman Leyden Papyrus found at Thebes (which is a recipe book for pigments dating to the fourth century AD); a Byzantine manuscript from Lucca dating from the eighth century AD and the 12th century Mappae Clavicula.[313] According to Herringham, the 'alchemical' industrial practices expounded in all of these treatises, demonstrate an uninterrupted lineage in the conceptualization of trade practices 'from the Roman Empire through the Carolingian period and onwards'.[314] With this in mind, it appears that if the function of the artist changes, in Classical, Byzantine, Medieval and Renaissance eras, to a great extent, certain (craft) techniques and materials did not. It is the fact of committing this knowledge to the written word that

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313 Herringham, C. J. P. *The Book of Art of Cennino Cennini: A Contemporary Practical Treatise Quattrocento Painting Translated from the Italian, with Notes on Mediæval Art Methods*. (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1899)

314 Ibid. *xvi*

is pertinent. The technical nature of Cennini's book is worth bearing in mind when considering how 'authorship' works in terms of iconography. What Cennini does in his manual is set down common practices, formulae and methods - is his work a more 'authored' work of individual 'imagination' than the iconography it was designed to assist in the production of? In the light of this comparison, can the 'copybook' work of medieval artists be regarded as less authored than the work of later artists? Is Cennini's authorship best understood as a claim to ring-fence knowledge, rather than to originate it? Can it be implicated in the narrative of individuation through 'invention'?

Kostylo argues that the general expansion in the amount of technical literature concerned with the mechanical arts which was produced in the 15th and 16th centuries had a significant role to play in separating craft knowledge from the hand:

> Traditionally, technical and craft knowledge was transmitted orally through apprenticeship systems or handed down through families, from one generation to the next. With the advancement of craft technologies and the expansion of trade investment, however, such modes of transmission no longer seemed sufficient and artisans, entrepreneurs and investors began to rely on printed industrial manuals in order to learn a trade. Changing technologies pressured craftsmen to acquire new skills, many of which they could gain or improve by reading books, while their wealthy and literate but inexperienced patrons wanted to learn how to maximize the profitability of their investments.[315]

Her understanding links the narrative of invention and originality ('new skills' and 'changing technologies') to entrepreneurship, profitability and 'investment'. In this order,

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315 Kostylo, op. cit. p47

a manual like Cennini's is authored not only because its physical form in writing allows it to be separated from the fabric of the commonplace and the covert continuum of oral transmission, but because it advances and disseminates knowledge of new skills and technologies, resulting in profit. Within her rhetoric of market-driven expediency, Kostylo acknowledges the role that this kind of technical literature has in narrowing 'the gap between cultures of learning and artisanal craft production'.[316] In setting technical knowledge in writing, Cennini effects a split, which allows him to sign common knowledge as an author, (ultimately instituting it as the intellectual property of an individual). Broadly, read as a separation of technical knowledge from the hand and cultures of oral transmission, the production of artisan manuals run parallel to the denudation of the script, the displacement of materiality and the emergence of the artist against the object: it involves the acquistion of privilege by individuals.

5.3.5 COURTIERS & TERMINOLOGY

Seidel's alliance of Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* signature to his civic status has been considered, as has the notion that Pacino's signature constructs an equivalence between the artist and the donor. Likewise, Smith allies the production of technical manuals in the context of Renaissance naturalism to the diversion of political power and the reformulation of social status for artisans. Cennini himself points out that '…painting on panels is the proper employment of a gentleman, and that, with velvet on his back, he

316 Ibid. p44

may do what he pleases.'[317] Such a view styles the painter as a gentleman, and the acquisition of an elevated social status exerts a pull on painting away from other artisanal practices.[318] If Pacino signs his name parallel to that of the donor, implying that they are both equivalent before God (and the congregation), and yet, as Rubin believes, his signature is not an indication of authorship, the aquistion or declaration of social status cannot be held to be delivered by artistic accomplishments or 'invention'. Cennini, in the same period, indicates the painter parallel to the 'gentleman', i.e. a high status individual, with literary interests and abilities. The talents of the gentleman are profiled by his social status and they are read as immanent in such a superior individual. Pursuant to that, Cennini prefaces *Il Libero dell'Arte* by saying that (the best) painters are those who work without (primarily) desiring financial reward, and he mentions the habits (enthusiasm, reverence, obedience, constancy) that artists ought to cultivate. As with the religious edicts that governed the production of art in the Byzantine period, the personal habits and behaviour of the artist in developing the practice of painting are important - the proper approach to production is an internalized, 'invisible' attitude (or self-consciousness). The view that styles the painter as a gentleman, incipient in Cennini is, according to Jean Gimpel, one that is reiterated and established by Ghiberti in his *Commentarii* and Alberti in his treatise *On Painting* as part of the drive to establish painting and sculpture in the Liberal (rather than Mechanical Arts) by means of theorizing.[319]

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317 Herringham, op. cit. p122

318 The elevation of painters (and sculptors) amounts to a renaissance of status: Roman accounts of Appelles, Phidias and Lysippus place them on a par with nobility.

319 Gimpel, J. *Against Art and Artists* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991)

Gimpel remarks that the title of Ghiberti's *Commentarii* is a nod to humanist writings and that it provides the first autobiography of a sculptor:

> Born in 1378, Ghiberti was fifteen when the great bourgeois families of Florence regained their full power [following a period of financial turmoil]. They no longer feared either the nobility or the lower classes, but they were also no longer animated by the creative energies of a rising class. They produced sons who were indifferent or hostile to business and whose preoccupations were henceforth literary. These scholars or men of letters were in fact the first humanists of the Renaissance, men with a passionate interest in antiquity. Supported by their family wealth, they devoted themselves to study…[320]

Precedents for the elevation of art above commerical practice exist in the legends and myths that have filtered through from Antiquity - apparently Zeuxis refused payment for work. It was as commercially unsullied Liberal Arts that the practices of painting and sculpture were gradually embourgeoised during the Renaissance. So when the publication of artisans treatises is taken to represent 'a convergence between scholarship, craftsmanship and business acumen', implicated in that representation is the aristocratic denial of (morally and aesthetically corrupting) 'price'.[321] Some 150 years later, in Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528), painters - the situation was slightly different for sculptors - were very definitely read as participants in a long, high status tradition:

> …I recall having read that in the ancient world, and in Greece especially, children of gentle birth were required to learn painting at school, as a worthy and necessary accomplishment, and it was ranked among the foremost of the liberal arts; subsequently, a public law was passed forbidding it to be taught to slaves. It was also held in great

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320 Ibid. p26

321 Kostlyo, op. cit. p47

> honour among the Romans, and from it the very noble family of the Fabii took its name, for the first Fabius was called *Pictor*. He was, indeed, an outstanding painter, and so devoted to the art that when he painted the walls of the Temple of Salus he signed his name: this was because (despite his having been born into an illustrious family, honoured by so many consular titles, triumphs and other dignities, and despite the fact that he himself was a man of letters, learned in law and numbered among the orators) Fabius believed that he could enhance his name and reputation by leaving a memorial pointing out that he had also been a painter. And there was no lack of other celebrated painters belonging to other illustrious families.[322]

Castiglione, who links the efficacy of painting and drawing to military interests, observes that 'the first Fabius' signed his name to enhance his reputation and to commemorate his activity beyond the titles he had inherited. Castiglione views the signature as a mark of pride in singular activity within the idiom of painting. Signature is an aristocratic practice.

For Gimpel, the type of embourgeoisment advanced by Ghiberti and Castiglione led to the development of the modern definition of the word 'artist' for whom the 'artisan' is 'other'.[323] He traces its etymology in French, claiming that if the idea of the artist was formed in the 15th century, it was not until the middle of the 18th century that the term began to be used in contrast to 'worker' or 'craftsman'. [324] He says that the French word *artiste* derives ultimately from *ars*, which he defines as 'University Faculty', and which

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322 Castiglione, B. *The Book of the Courtier*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp96–8

323 Williams, op. cit. pp40-42. Williams traces the etymology of 'art' it roots in the practices of any general skill, and notices the branching differentiation of 'artist' not only from'artisan', but from 'scientist' and 'technologist'.

324 Gimpel, op. cit. p4

in 16th century France could be used to describe chemists. At this time, he says, *artiste* and *artisan* are equivalent and the word *ouvrier* still had some currency for describing painters and sculptors. It was not until the middle of the 17th century in France that the term *artisan* was rejected for painters and sculptors; even at this time, the term *artiste* included chemists: the first 'modern' definition of *artiste* occurs in the 1762 edition of the Dictionary of the French Academy.[325] So for Gimpel, the ideological change in painting and sculpture led the terminological change. There is nothing inherent in the skills or 'practitioners' involved that separates artist from artisan. In terms of what this means for signature, a device used to signify the 'artist' not the 'artisan', it might be said that the appearance of signatures on artworks does not mark the schism between artists and artisans 'organically'. When the artist's signature is prioritised, there is a strategic suppression of the artisan's signature, (which may well be present, as at Sèvres). If artists's signatures can be differentiated from the signatures and monograms of artisans only on the basis of their empirical form, (the autograph vs the stamp), or by the nature of the substrate on which they appear, then in terms of a Derridean conception of signature, there is no effective difference at all.

Concentrating on the vocabulary used in inscriptions, Louise Matthew traces ennoblization as it is evidenced through changing terminology in 15th century Venetian signatures. Prior to the mid-15th century, she says signatures typically employed a participle of the verb *pingere* (meaning 'to paint') and *hoc opus* (after the artist's name). As the 15th century progressed, Matthew observes that the range of vocabulary used by

[325] Ibid. p5

artists in inscriptions increased - she gives the example of Vittore Carpaccio, who, around 1500, began to use both *pingere* and *fingere* in his inscriptions: *fingere* has the connotation of conceiving, imagining or inventing.[326] As a verb of invention, *fingere* is still connected to *ars* and material culture (albeit more loosely), so it doesn't quite have the same conceptual repercussions as does Van Eyck's use of *sum/esse,* which distances the artist from the painting. Nonetheless, *fingere* can still be considered a decisive step towards the elevation of painting into the Liberal Arts. Matthew also comments on the fact that some historians regard the adoption of the Latin term *pictor* in the 16th century to refer to artists in preference to the Italian vernacular *depentore* to be a mark of ennobilization, though she points out that *pictor* was used principally in documents ancillary to artworks rather than on the artworks themselves.

Critically, use of Latinized (or Greek) vocabulary and name-spellings (rather than the vernacular) during the Renaissance, accompanied monumentalized signatures, i.e. signatures which entered the representative schema as engravings on columns, stones and the like: Andrea Mantegna was particularly associated with the form. Debts to the great artists of Antiquity were signified by the inclusion of archaeological subject matter, Latinisation and by choice of font - Roman rather than Gothic.[327] As signatory practice flourished during the Renaissance, artists gradually dropped qualifying signatory verbs and nouns from their inscriptions - Matthew gives the example of Jacopo Bellini's heir, Giovanni Bellini, who abbreviated *pinxit* (3rd person perfect of *pingere*), to '*P.*'; and

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326 Matthew, op. cit.

327 Mantegna's *St Sebastian* (1456-59) is a good example and includes his signature in Greek.

example of Lorenzo Lotto, who is known to have signed paintings with his name alone, (i.e. without any qualifying verb). In order for these abbreviations and ommissions to occur, there must have been general acceptance that the name appearing in isolation referred to the artist responsible for overseeing its production, (however much manual involvement that entailed).

At the end of the 15th century, signatures had not only fallen out of favour, Matthew says they were 'associated with an artisan 'workshop' image that some of these younger Venetian artists now wished to disavow.'[328] This move away from signature institutes a novel, specific association between art production and the individual artistic hand, closing down the validity of polyvalent methods of production: it also privileges Court commissions (more likely unsigned) over speculative or public work. Crucially, it is the abandonment of (alphabetic) signature that marks autonomous creativity and defines the artist in Modern terms. The abandonment of written signatures is linked to the developing art of connoisseurship: by the time Castiglione was writing in the 16th century, courtiers and gentlemen collectors of art were beginning to want paintings in novel genres, and to recognize artists's virtuosity, skill and inventiveness without the presence of an obvious label. Connoisseurs wanted to discriminate and derive satisfaction from the utilisation of secret, aesthetic knowledge. When applied to art, a term linked to Castiglione - *sprezzatura* - describes the increasingly immediate, 'expressive', *maniera* (individual, painterly style or manner) and gives onto the artist's 'affective' skills. Raphael, who painted a portrait of Castiglione in 1514-1515, is an artist particularly associated with

328 Matthew, op. cit. p337

sprezzatura with Gombrich noting he had a 'sweetness of temper which would commend him to influential patrons': Raphael's temperament and deportment made him the ideal courtier so the implication is that Raphael's sociability (not merely his talent) helped him secure commissions.[329]

Whilst *maniera* and *sprezzatura* are not necessarily incompatible with the appearance of written signatures - Raphael had a significant and idiosyncratic, if infrequent, signatory practice - they demonstrate the painterly inclination to diffuse signature into the expressive hand.[330] When Raphael did sign his work, he characteristically 'hid' his signature on the representation of garments, engaging his patrons in a game of wit. Rona Goffen observes that Titian's use of signature also engaged patrons in games of wit:

> [Titian's signature adds] ...but one more detail for close inspection, sudden discovery and amused delight. The transfer to the court portraits not only carries a note of refined appreciation, but created a pictorial equivalent for being a court intimate. With these devices, Titian made his name a form of conceit, a pleasantry, a seemingly casual reminder that Titanius made each picture, stated with the witty and graceful sprezzatura so recently described by Badessare Castiglione as attributes of the perfect Courtier.[331]

Titian is an exemplar of how strong the purchase of secular themes and attitudes was in art by the 16th century and an exemplar for the way in which signature was changing towards the end of the Renaissance in response to the changing character of the (advanced) 'market'. Rather than an act of votive subscription or the advancement of a

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329 Gombrich, op. cit. p239. Raphael's inherited position as the son of Giovanni Santi, the 'the first artist-poet of the Renaissance', is also relevant: see, Goffen, op. cit. p123

330 Goffen, ibid. pp123-42

331 Rubin, op. cit. pp585-6

public name, Titian's signatures describe an elite circle of sympathetic, aesethetic recognition between artist and initiate patrons; they make claims to courtly status on his behalf.

5.3.6 DÜRER, SIGNATURE AND COPYRIGHT

If Cennini's treatise can be seen to assert an authorial claim by enclosing common knowledge, in terms of the nature of similar proprietorial claims made through visual art - at least in terms of print culture - the case of the 15th century German artist, Albrecht Dürer, is instructive. Dürer made extensive use of a personal monogram, a form stylistically indebted to goldsmiths's hallmarks. In this, he followed not only the habit of his familial trade, but also the monogrammatic behaviour of his predecessor, Martin Schöngauer.[332] Wood states that Schöngauer was the 'first famous German artist', largely because he initialled his prints and those initials functioned as a 'return address' in his work.[333] Wood suggests that when monograms became associated with drawings (as opposed to prints), they began to take on a meaning which involves the establishing the primacy of originals. Applying a monogram to a drawing in the kind of circumstances Wood describes, as reference material in an artist's studio, for example, is a private action, not unlike the hidden prayer of Lando. Wood says the monogram became:

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[332] See notes of the Alte Pinakothek, Munich at http://www.pinakothek.de/en/martin-schongauer, (accessed 9th April 2013)

[333] Wood, C. *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p347

> …a tether that connected the artifact [sic] to the moment of creation. [This] signature was the interface between two identities of the artist, as creator moving and acting inside the domain of art, reacting to other artworks, and as a person acting in the world alongside everyone else. The signature split the artist in two, and helped everyone get accustomed to the artist as a kind of poet. The signature also signaled that the drawing was now collectible, that is that nonartists might value it, and in particular value it on account of its origins. A date only reinforced all of this. German artists began to leave paper trails marking their own careers. They produced art that already predicated its own narration, art that presented itself as the legible record of a flow of creativity punctuated by unrepeatable acts. When art can be pieced together on chronologically ordered, reproducible sheets of paper, there will finally be a public culture of art, as opposed to the traditional culture of art dispersed between towns and monasteries and stitched together by the imperfect memories of travelers…[334]

The original did not, then, develop speculatively in direct response to the demands of the market in early capitalism, but almost as a consequence of autodidacticism. Wood notes that Dürer recorded the authorship of artists who had not signed themselves on several drawings - for example, he annotated and dated a drawing of a horse and rider with name of the artist, Wolfgang Beurer.[335] He suggests that in performing this countersignature, Dürer 'acknowledged the authority of other artists' and it was his own sense of authority that prompted him to do this. Signing and dating drawings has the consequence of attenuating them in a linear sequence in which 'first' is a principle which overwrites circularity and substitionality. The passage quoted above also suggests that the act of applying monograms to drawings might have catalysed a market where there had been

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334 Ibid. pp349-350

335 Ibid. p348

none. In Dürer's practice, the role of documentation - the 'paper trail' - in establishing the value of art makes an early appearance.

Smith, with her interest in scientific epistemology, uses Dürer as the exemplar *par excellence* of 'the effects of the exchange between artisans and humanists' and to support her theory that naturalism was allied to artisanal self-assertion. For Smith, Dürer's treatises *Lesson in Measurement* and *Four Books on Human Proportion* may demonstrate an 'intense excitement about the notion of ideal proportions' but never dispense with the need to relay personal, particular experience and knowledge through art. In this they demonstrate a Germanic (Gothic) 'particularism' (in relation to matter) which contrasts with the Italian (Renaissance) 'perfectionism' (and the ideal). Smith alleges Dürer's treatises might have been provoked by the domination of his trade by guilds.[336] Guilds control people through circumscribing materials, keeping trade practices secret, and limiting access to markets; as envisioned by Dürer, naturalism shifts the balance of power towards an 'autonomous' artist, who is gifted autonomous skill by natural (and unrepeatable) endowment. There is a synthesis between what an artist like Dürer is able to represent autopically, how talent devolves to the individual and the notion of originality. Nature is 'unlearned'; naturalism is objective and authoritative, an interruption to institutionally sedimented power in favour of the originating individual who is 'natural' himself, and, by extension, to the unique outputs of that individual.

[336] Smith, op. cit. p68

In this context, then, it is surprsing that someone who sees himself *prima facie* as divinely gifted, should be implicated in one of the first copyright cases. Like Van Eyck, Dürer was a Northern (non-Italian) artist favoured by Vasari, who makes extensive mention of him in the *Life of Marcantonio Bolognese & Other Engravers of Print*, as well as referring to him in the *Life of Pontormo*.[337] Vasari reports that Marc'Antonio copied Dürer's woodcut cycle, 'Life of the Virgin' in facsimile:

> …he added to these the signature that Albrecht used for all his works, which was "A.D.", and they proved to be so similar in manner, that, no one knowing that they had been executed by Marc' Antonio, they were ascribed to Albrecht, and were bought and sold as works by his hand. News of this was sent in writing to Albrecht, who was in Flanders, together with one of the counterfeit Passions executed by Marc' Antonio; at which he flew into such a rage that he left Flanders and went to Venice, where he appeared before the Signoria and laid a complaint against Marc' Antonio. But he could obtain no other satisfaction but this, that Marc' Antonio should no longer use the name or the above-mentioned signature of Albrecht on his works.[338]

This account is frequently thought to refer to a very early 'copyright' case.[339] The issue at stake turns on the replication of Dürer's monogram by Marc' Antonio (known as Raimondi) rather than on the copying of the image *per se*, with the Venetian Senate deciding that whereas the images belonged to Christendom (and could be copied freely), Dürer's monogram could not be copied. At this point, it is impossible not to recall that Derrida's mischievious games with 'Sarl' circle around the notion that it is not only

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337 Vasari, op. cit.

338 Ibid.

339 Late copies of Dürer's work by Raimondi do not feature his monogram – this is accepted as evidence that the case probably took place. Vasari's account is listed as an early 'primary source' in copyright in Deazley, Kretschmer & Bentley, op. cit.

irrelevant to (try and) copyright 'truth', but impossible. As a trademark, Dürer's name - and monogram - belonged to him alone. Wood points out that 'the monogram retained the memory of its original, economically rational form' even when it was adopted by painters and printmakers who did not have Dürer's connection to goldsmithing.[340] An accelerated link between the monogram, trade practice and humanism is implied by Smith in her account of Dürer's use of it:

> Conscious of its intellectual and economic worth, he employed the A.D. monogram on almost all his works, including drawings, self-consciously creating a signed and dated retrospective record of his artistic development. Dürer's monogram, like that of Schöngauer before him, referred to the authenticating mark of goldsmiths…(Dürer) bought his own printing press and brought out a book of his woodcuts, *The Apocalypse* (1496-1498), the first book designed and published by an artisan completely on his own undertaking.[341]

Dürer's use of a monogram departs from the trade practices of goldsmiths as far as it involves itself with 'recording' and 'artistic development', but, expressly, it was already a conduit for economic value and retained that role. The inheritances that monogrammatic forms derive from goldsmiths make the naturalistic representation they seal equivalent to precious material, thus what is 'immaterial' is connected in (economic and ideological) value via the signature to what (was) material. Kostylo says of the case that:

> It could be argued that while the Venetian legal system did not consider the copying of Dürer's prints to be illegal, at the same time, it offered protection for something much

340 Wood, op. cit. p349
341 Smith, op. cit. p68

> more subtle and immaterial – not the image but its expression and the artist's individual style (*maniera*) – an acknowledgement of Dürer's generative powers.[342]

On the basis of the very sketchy 'evidence' that exists, it seems, on the contrary, that Dürer's '*maniera*' was not protected, if it can be said to have existed at all. Where *maniera* gives the 'look' of his prints, leading representation, Raimondi was at liberty to copy – it appears to have been only the monogram that he was forbidden from copying. Interestingly, Kostylo equates 'expression' with 'monogram', feeding it with the idea of 'autograph' – for her 'expression' is simultaneous with *maniera*. It may be that Dürer's use of a monogram is paradigmatic because his use of it conflates trade and 'personality', but the monogram is more mechanistic than expressive.

[342] Kostylo, op. cit. p43

6. SIGNATURE AS STANDARDISATION: *I PROMISE*

6.1 SUBSTITUTIONALITY

The notion of signature plays a prominent role in *Forgery, Replica, Fiction*, a work which was considered in the last Chapter in connection with the notion of 'mutual substitutionality'. Wood argues that print technology was a necessary motor for the new science of archaeology which emerged in the 15th and 16th centuries, and that concomitantly, artefacts acquired a documentary value resulting in a displacement of their 'magical authority'. The temporal element of 'magical authority' as a constant present, a *general maintenance*, is opposed to chronology, which becomes operative by organising images and objects in a linear fashion. For Wood, it is mechanized replication of the image in prints, however rudimentary, that created the distinction, fundamental to modern culture, between rational and irrational thinking about time and also between the 'artwork' and other forms of representation. Linear, chronological organisation is 'rational'; magical authority and *general maintenance* is irrational. When print culture was established specifically as a means of disseminating images for the purposes of scholarship:

> …the time-bending referential rhetoric of the image was from this point on quarantined inside a new institution, the work of art. The artwork, the merely fictional image, became the new natural habitat of anachronistic thinking. Outside such fictions, the once-universal temporal confusion was carefully untangled, redistributed into the poor

> binarism of error and truth. Under the new regime of print, the substitution was criminalized as a forgery. Anachronism became the attribute of bad scholarship and good art.[343]

The work of art is thus necessarily historical, located in rational, linear chronologies. Wood's theory understands the place of artefacts in 'pre-modern' culture as mutually substitutional vehicles for general 'truths', the genesis of which is accepted rather than questioned: the implication is that 'truths' are not dependent on 'facts'. In the scheme of substitutionality, the particularity of artefacts is not of primary importance because the artefacts represented omnipotent truths that originate elsewhere, (unseen or lost). The production of icons as *acheiropoieta* fits with the scheme of substitutionality - icons demonstrate potential fungibility. Fungibility shares the etymology that was explored in relation to Derrida's use of fungal metaphors in *Signsponge* (i.e. *fungibilius*, derived from *fungor* - present infinitive *fungi* - means 'to perform'). Substitutionality is effective because it's dynamism is a performative dynamism holding together a simple field in which individual elements are approximate and dispensible - it is not a dynamism directing a chronological trajectory. Substitutional artefacts describe functions rather than present themselves as entities. Wood's theory of substitutionality is not incompatible with the Foucauldian *épistème,* grounded in similitude, which was postulated as governing the era between the 9th and 16th centuries.[344] George Kubler's treatise *The Shape of Time: Remarks on The History of Things*, also approaches the notion of what Wood frames as

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343 Wood, op.cit. p13

344 Foucault, op. cit.

substitutionality though it tends to mitigate against the importance of the notional work of art as an historical form at all.[345]

So unlike a substitutional artefact, the artwork is, according to Wood, necessarily specific and historical, documenting its own truth as a 'fact', presenting itself as singular and non-fungible. It is adjunct to historicity that 'originality' is imputed into this 'new category of relic': an artwork is an 'auto-original' because it cannot be replicated - auto-originality is a principle of discontinuity. In this respect, discontinuity is self-sufficiency as self-referential completeness, and on this basis, originality is not a quality that flows from *ex nihilo* creation or invention, (although this is one of the myths that supports the otherwise inconsequential cultural value of the artwork). Discontinuity is the action of separating and isolating, and the signature is very much implicated in this action - signatures appear to perform the separation. Originality is 'merely' the marking or drawing of trait: superficial self-similarity or the simultaneity of multiple images and versions do not present any necessary problem in determining 'originality'.

Wood explains the place of the auto-original as follows:

> No work by Duchamp or Andy Warhol threatened even minimally the basic axiom of originality that still governs the idea of art in the modern West. The artwork that takes up banality and interchangeability as subject matter does not want to *be* banal and interchangeable. To represent the copy is to reassert the distinction between copy and original. The auto-original work affects insouciance about copies and substitutes… The

[345] Kubler, G. *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962)

> originality, or auto-originality, of the modern artwork is simply the principle of its noncontinuity with everything around it (the normal, the real, the functional, etc.). There may be an author behind the work; authoredness may be part of the content of the work; or not. The distinction that art insists on is the distinction between art and non-art – and never more so when the erasure of that distinction is taken up as a theme or as a desideratum. [346]

In Wood's opinion, authoredness and originality have been confused - they are interchangeable. Since the Renaissance, in art history, originality has gradually assumed the quality of creative exception and been brought to the foreground by myths of genius, gift and organic exception. Scrolling back to Medieval and Classical precendents, genius might thus be understood to involve discontinuities validated by authorities masquerading as instances of originality. The instrumentality of the rhetoric of originality in promoting lines of authoritarian inheritance are buried by the conceptualization of genius as something which is embodied in the exceptional (biological) individual and made manifest in the *ex nihilo* creations of that individual.

Obviously, 'Duchamp' and 'Andy Warhol' represent endpoints in what Wood perceives as 'modern art' because Duchamp and Warhol appear to push the limits of what is accepted aesthetically as original, using what Wood figures as banal and interchangeable, (for example, pre-made industrial goods). Bearing in mind Wood's position on the auto-original, it is perhaps possible to say that Duchamp and Warhol are not so much pushing limits in the sense of breaking new ground in a formal sense, rather they are revealing aspects of what has been suppressed in the artwork in favour of the artist. The mechanism

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[346] Wood, op. cit. p18

which both employ - with a heightened awareness of its function and power - is signature, and what has been supressed in the artwork is fungibility. The double movement in signature is what permits such a suppression, (it is the same but different, here but elsewhere).

Both Duchamp and Warhol understood that signature is the apparatus of insertion into history, the principle of discontinuity. What they have in common is their exploitation of the very low level 'authoredness' that can be seen to be transferred in signature, and they have an appreciation of the dilations and contractions of aperture that signature allows. They understand that the very slight, banal fact of the empirical unrepeatability described by the sequential co-ordinates of chronological 'time' and taxonomical 'place' is what gives an artwork non-substitutional 'originality'. As vectors, time and place might be seen to intersect in signature, describing the contours of originality. Here - explicitly - to sign is to date.[347] Signature is what reserves an artefact from the continuum of everyday life, appearing to fix it while covertly making sure it is never fixed, never wholly separated from the continuum of everyday life. Signature is always ready to respond to, or allow, investment. The notion of standardisation - the general theme for this Chapter - appears to stand in the face of originality, and it is signature's ability to mediate the relationship between that which is unique and that which is standard that is of interest.

[347] Notable in this context are 'Otobiographies', *Copy Signature Archive*, '9/11 and Global Terrorism: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida'.

6.1.1 AUTHENTICA

Wood reveals a critical place for signature in the construction of the modern artwork. In the scheme of substitutionality and in the genesis of print culture, Wood emphasizes the catalytic importance of the Medieval practice of attaching labels to relics.[348] Claims to holiness were based on the provenance of relics, (especially saintly bones). However, these claims were open to doubt, competition and counterfeit – for example, records dating to the 15th century show that the Cathedral 'signed' by Giselbertus at Autun was involved in a dispute over the authenticity of the relics of St Lazarus it purportedly held.[349] Doubt necessitated a process of correction. Unlike icons, whose secure, abstract typology is an effective guarantee of the theology they represent, (a truth that is elsewhere), the claim that relics make to be the genuine remains of a mortal human is not representational but embodied. Bones are indistinguishable from each other on the basis of form, but the claim they make to holiness is based on an essential, if imperceptible, embodied difference: a provenance. In schematic terms the problem that they raise might be described as a problem in which realism confronts naturalism as seamless mimesis, (a variant of this confrontation is involved in the problem or enigma 'embodied' in the *Arnolfini* signature, which is a 'real' signature within the scheme of a less than perfectly mimetic 'naturalisitic' image). When 'counterfeit' general bones are passed off as authentic holy relics, the (naturalist) copy abuts against the (realist) original with no appreciable clues as to which is which. Despite being representational, icons are more

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348 Wood, op. cit. pp53-59

349 Seidel, op.cit. p38. Parts of Lazarus, including his skull, were held at Autun - a rival claim to Lazarus's skull existed nearby at Avallon: the existence of 2 skulls making the same claim presented a problem.

unproblematically 'realist' because their truth is not tightly circumscribed on the basis of embodied difference and in terms of its image, the authenticity of an icon necessarily proceeds on the basis of sameness.

Wood observes that in the Middle Ages, authentic relics were 'corrected' by the application of an *authenticum* to differentiate them from imposter-relics:

> Because bones look alike, the entire connection to the past rested on trust in the labelling process. A bone is nothing without a label. The twelfth- or thirteenth-century excavator hoped to find a label called an *authenticum* attached to the bones with string, or a bronze plate with an inscription lying alongside the corpse or inside the skull. Discovery reports from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries placed special emphasis on such labels; bishops and popes guaranteed their authenticity. Modern scholarship, however, considers such "found" labels to be forgeries, in the sense that they postdate the death of the saint or holy personage by many centuries.[350]

As Christianity established and travelled across Europe, blending with topographically assignable pagan practices, the physical and temporal distance from defining holy experiences and personalities increased, with the consequence that - to recall the terms Derrida works with in 'Plato's Pharmacy' - links to chains of 'living memory' (*mneme*) were stretched to breaking point. Labelling (which might be thus read as *hypnomnesis*) papered over the cracks and opportunities for falsification wich arose in the stretched chain. As *pharmakon*, the *authenticum* sought to negate counterfeits and imposters as it simultaneously became the most effective device for constructing them. Wood speculates that the *authenticum* was 'one of the templates for the modern artwork' and says:

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[350] Wood, op. cit. pp54-55

> The spatialization of the referential message, and the difficult claim to analogicity or a resemblant relation with an original, alienated the label from its referent and pulled it towards its won peculiar, uncontrollable sort of truth. The differential relations among labels produced meanings that quickly fell out of phase with the original referential pretext for the image. Relic hunting was an enterprise. Relics were not found but made, framed for use by creative labelling.[351]

Here, as *différance*, labelling organises the field of self-similar, non-fungible others and development of the modern artwork proceeds on the basis of alienation from material. In Wood's analysis, the modern artwork develops in relation to the processes of the verification of relics by guarantee, or the manufacture of them by counterfeit. The (Renaissance) genius of the individual artist is not involved.

Wood says that print culture gradually allowed the dissemination of a sort of refined *authenticum* which illustrated and documented relics and shrines in pictorial form. In this trajectory, the relic-substrate became increasingly distant with the result that interest in the prints themselves increases. When the print presents an image, the need to visit and experience the relic or shrine represented is diminshed. Incidentally, and over time, interest in print images results in the substitution of the skills of the artist for the relic-substrate, (hence the early copyright case involving Dürer and Raimondi), and in the multiplication of images in circulation that reference the relic-substrate.[352] In terms of what has already been discussed, once again, the artist can be seen to emerge against the

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351 Ibid. p56

352 Ibid. pp341-345

object, (in this instance the relic-substrate), not out of the artisan. The artist (print-maker) is someone who can be seen to generate and authenticate multiples.

6.1.2 CARTELLINI

The form of the *authenticum* as a paper label might be seen to be repeated in the later appearance of *cartellini* as a vehicle for signatures in Italian Renaissance art. *Cartellini* take the form of *trompe l'oeil* depictions of inscriptions on paper within the pictorial scheme of a painting. *Cartellini* are not exclusively signatory, but signatures feature in the *cartellini* of the Venetian workshops with which they are significantly associated – the workshops of Jacopo Bellini (1400 – c.1470) and Antonio Vivirani (1440 – c.1484). Conventionally, *cartellini* are thought to have originated in the depiction of biblical scrolls and the lettering they carry, in Gothic or cursive script, is associated 'more often [with] writing in the vernacular' than with official pronouncments.[353] In this, a distinction can be drawn between *cartellini* and *trompe l'oeil* inscriptions which revive engraved, Classical Roman lettering on stone tablets or columns - the *cartellino* is more informal and playful than *trompe l'oeil* engravings. For Matthew, the fact that *cartellini* sometimes depict air-bourne paper is an indication that the artist is engaged in a demonstration of skill which triumphs over the normal behaviour of materials in time and space. In this, her view of painterly skill is sympathetic to that of Preimseberger who sees painting competing to master three dimensions. Matthew observes that *trompe l'oeil* effects in

[353] Matthew, op. cit.

cartellini are heightened when paper is shown to be creased and crumpled – the illusion of 'reality' requires evidence of use, age and handling. This illustionistic 'wear and tear' is a narrative element rather than an attempt to directly represent 'real life', and the proasic, shallow geometry of a piece of paper is especially suited to creating false 'depth' through foreshortening. Matthew credits the first *cartellino* to Fra Filippo Lippi, a 15th century Florentine painter whose only known *cartellino* was painted into the *Madonna with Child (Tarquinia Madonna)* (1437) (Fig. 8). The conjunction between 'first' and 'only' in Lippi's *Tarquinia cartellino* is the same conjunction that Derrida notices in naturalised readings of signature, (the same conjunction is also found in *The Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece*), and this conjunction conceals the imperative to read the Renaissance as a time for painterly invention: the implication is that Lippi 'invented' the *cartellino*.

On the basis of invention, there is no room for locating a meaningful precedent for *cartellini* in the indicative 'everyday' Renaissance habits of annotating and cataloguing collections.[354] The antiquarian and naturalist tendencies of Renaissance artists resulted in the acquisition of sculptural artefacts. The 14th century Paduan artist and pedagogue, Francesco Squarcione, kept a wide collection of fragments and sculptures to use as models for teaching. However, despite the possibility that such collections conceivably carried annotations and labels, the rhetoric of invention debars the suggestion that the *cartellino* is a pictorial element derived from a low-level practice located in the 'everyday'. It would seem that there is no room for any generative connection between

[354] Lincoln, E. *The invention of the Italian Renaissance printmaker*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) p23

the *authenticum* and the *cartellino* as labels, bits of paper or *aide-memoires*. In tracing the journey of the *cartellino* from Florence to Venice, where it established in the 15th and early 16th centuries, Kandice Rawlings is persuaded that Lippi's adoption of the form could have been a response to 'lost *cartellini*' in the work of Squarcione.[355] However, in the absence of direct evidence, she immediately dismisses the possibility that *cartellini* could have developed in relation to an everyday practice connected with the possibility of studio labels, despite his pedagogical collection. Conceivably, Squarcione's collection of studio models could have carried identification labels, (unattached paper labels are known to have been lost from panel paintings), so it is at least possible that an artist would have used this 'lived' experience in their paintings: 'life' models were very much used to inform other aspects of the paintings in which *cartellini* appear.[356] At least in part, it is the persuasiveness and naturalized establishment of the rhetoric of Renaissance invention - coupled with the impossibility of recovering a full understanding of studio practice from history - that seems to have prevented Rawlings from admitting this possibility.

On the face of it, Hall's explanation of the route by which the signature appeared in the *Arnolfini Portrait* (as a *veritas* wall inscription) looks to be methodologically opposed to Rawlings' understanding of the route by which the *cartellino* signature appears in Reanissance paintings (as invention). Hall insists on the entiriety of the scene 'out there', (in reality, in the *Arnolfini* chamber), and Rawlings believes the *cartellino* can be nothing

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355 Rawlings, K. *Liminal Messages: The Cartellino in Italian Renaissance Painting* Phd Thesis, (Rutgers University, NJ: 2009)

356 Ibid. p8

but a painterly invention, wholly 'in there'. What Hall and Rawlings share is a desire to circumscribe the development of signatory practices within the idiom of painting - Hall wants to explain the *Arnolfini* painting wholly as an achievement in naturalism; Rawlings wants to explain the *cartellino* as an achievement in illusionism, (a camp valence of naturalism). Despite the (documented) antiquarian interests of Renaissance Humanists, Rawlings constructs the 'reality' of the *cartellino* as an effect of *trompe l'oeil*: it is explicitly not connected to material culture or the studio environment - she wants to establish the significance of a fictive paper substrate as a vehicle for invention through the *cartellino*, and locates its development within conventional, Vasarian history. Both Rawlings and Hall fail to appreciate the significance of the everyday to signature and labelling. Though Wood concentrates on print culture and not Renaissance painting, his work on *authentica* could be seen to augment the case for seeking precedents for this element of Renaissance practice outside a painterly idiom.

6.1.3 SUPERSCRIPTION

Whatever their origins, *cartellini* are involved in the tactics of super-subscription, or the use of signatures to insinuate objects or artists in broadly relevant cultural or geographical contexts. As such, they have had a role to play in standardising art production. Matthew views the *cartellino* almost like an A.O.C (*appellation origine controlée*) - 'a recognizable clue to specific geographical identity', (a connotation that

had been eroded by the 17th century).[357] The strong export and speculative art markets which developed in Venice in the 15th century form the context in which the *cartellino* could function as a branding device. In this period, Matthew observes that Venetian artists signed their work more frequently than did artists in comparable Italian centres of artistic production. At this time, they were beginning to access new markets by shipping; to sell work direct from shop inventories (and at art fairs), rather than agree to work on commission for private patrons; and to be dominated by the presence of the highly successful workshops of Bellini and Vivirani.[358] These three conditions, access to new 'foreign' markets, speculative production and successful workshop organisation are of critical importance to making Venetian artwork more visible. Recognition of *cartellini* as a form specifically associated with Venice reinforces the grounds for stating that as a convenience, signature has the ability to restate physical proximity to place (as well as to the individual signatory) at a distance.

Matthew comments that the geographical distinctiveness of the signatures of Venetian artists was affected by an 'influx of ideas and visitors from artistic centres elsewhere', by the evolving identity of painters, and by the increasing narrative/symbolic complexity of their work. The artist's signature, in her analysis, is not only related to the particularity and success of Venice as a centre for commerce, but part of a trajectory that moves from standardized commercial device and guarantee to a mark of personal preference, wit and

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357 Mann, J. W. 'Identity signs: meanings and methods in Artemisia Gentileschi's signatures.' *Renaissance Studies* 23, No. 1 (2009) p95

358 Matthew, op. cit.

inventive skill. It is used explicitly to link commerce and (open) market competition to notions of artistic singularity and invention.

Commercial pragmatism was not the only reason that geographical designation or super-scription was an important function for signature during the Renaissance. Goffen, who notes that by the 14th century Italian artists were 'voluble' in signing their work, observes that Lorenzo Ghiberti use his signature on the first set of doors he produced for the *Battistero di San Giovanni* in Florence to indicate his place of origin and make a declaration of city-state allegiance.[359] Ghiberti uses his signature to mark a political affiliation. Names are not stable or fixed by virtue of being names, they admit instrumental changes, volitional or otherwise - the classic example used to denote the speech act (wedding vows), effects a nominal change. So the inclusion of a geographical designation in the names of artists at this time is not necessarily a stable assignment or an indication of an origin inherited at birth from the artist's biological parents. For example, the names that Mantegna employed or was assigned vary considerably across his career - an irony conisdered alongside his mastery of rendering stone and the notional permanence that his inscriptions thus represent. As already mentioned, the names of Renaissance artists often carry forward connotations related to places of work or training as well as birth - Andrea Pisano is also known by the surname da Pontedera; Jan Van Eyck was known to Vasari as Giovanni da Bruggia, etc. Thus, the signatures of Renaissance artists deliberately designate and assign qualities of connection which are not only outside painterly idiom, they are outside lines of patrilineal inheritance.

[359] Goffen, op. cit.

Signatures are employed to make connections that are artistically and politically useful or desired. The process of making and declaring such connections has the potential to prime spectators when they view artworks.

6.1.4 ROMAN SIGNATURE

Geographical designations and indications of cultural origin pre-date the Renaissance as factors which are involved in mediating the 'quality' of artworks. They can fulfill certain intangible expectations of patrons and have an intimate relationship with the signatory process and this is evidenced during the time of the Roman Empire when Greek art was considered superior to that produced natively in Italy. Conventionally, art history reads the strength of Greek precedents at this time and the exceptional achievements of Greek artists not only as an effective prohibition on the growth of any distinctive Roman art forms, but also as a prohibition on the development of artistic skills within the native Roman population, i.e. there was no distinctive 'Roman' art because there were few 'Roman' artists and those few were inferior craftsmen. Gombrich comments: 'Most artists who worked in Rome were Greeks, and most Roman collectors bought works of the great Greek masters, or copies of them.'[360] This comment in *The Story of Art* illustrates a pejorative take on the process of copying at the same time as it makes assumptions about the ethnicity of artists in Rome. More recent scholarship controverts both. Although it is supposed that a significant number of Greek craftsmen and artists

[360] Gombrich, op.cit. p80

migrated to Italy at the time of the Roman territorialization of the Eastern Mediterranean, Peter Stewart cautions against making the assumption that a Greek name on an artwork indicates a Greek artist. Historians like Gombrich assume that immigrant Greek artists 'naturally' dominated artistic production in Italy. The signatory inscriptions on Roman art would appear to confirm this because there is a prevalence of Greek names, written in Greek, amongst those inscriptions that exist.[361] Stewart speculates that some of these Greek names may have been a mark of 'quality' rather than the indication of an ethnic individual, particularly where the inscription includes mention of the artist's supposed geographical origins in a city with an established reputation for producing art (e.g. Athens).[362] If this is the case, superscription in Roman art trades on intangible 'goodwill' derived from the positive associations conveyed by a Greek name in this context. Effectively, quasi-Greek inscriptions operate like *cartellini* - like an A.O.C. As a mark of quality the artist's signature persistently opens out onto other stamps and brands. The goldsmith's monogram, which is linked to the requirement to provide assurances about the quality of gold, is, for example, a direct precedent for the signatory monograms of Schöngauer and Dürer. If Schöngauer's and Dürer's monograms transubstantiate links to the material value of gold, Roman 'Greek' signatures transubstantiate the value of place and ethnicity. In both instances, signature can be seen to permit the creation of immaterial, abstracted brand value from gold and cultural specificity respectively.

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361 Stewart, P. *The social history of Roman art*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

362 Ibid.

Supporting his contention that Roman inscriptions make qualitive artistic connections, Stewart points out that some Roman artists went by the names of illustrious Greek predecessors: a family of sculptors using the name 'Phidias' is known to have been active in Rome, and the coincidence seems suspiciously fortuitous.[363] The quality of being Greek is not an originary quality and the indicative power of the name to secure ethnic identity is compromised. The standardization of signature inscriptions in this way effects an integration of 'common cultural' aspects (or expectations) related to art production with discrete 'individual' artefacts through a process of signatory superscription. Common cultural aspects of art production may be arranged around controlled religious principles, (as in Byzantine practice) or around geographical designation (for the speculative market in Renaissance Venice), or around notional individual expression, (the 19th century bourgeois artist), but the means of their integration remains the same - it is always a signatory process. The standardization of signatory forms is the basis on which Derrida challenges the naturalized assumptions that underscore the construction of signature as a unique tethering to source. In autographic signatures, the operations of standardization are still present though they may appear to be suppressed at a stylistic level, but this is really a question of position on a scale which runs (typographically) from autographic gesture to stamp or print. When material and visual culture is structured according to the principles of non-fungibility, artefacts are relevant when they are seen to be 'unique' because signature and signatory processes tend to the gestural. When material and visual culture is structured according to the principles of substitutionality, artefacts

[363] Ibid. p20

are relevant when they conform to type and signature and signatory process tend towards the brand or seal.

6.1.5 INDIVIDUATION AND PERSONALITY

Understanding the place of *cartellini* in Renaissance art necessitates an understanding of the intersection between the individual artist, (marked by the capacity to execute inventions), and the process of superscription which locates the artist in networks of broader associations, be they geographic, commercial, political or social, (and not simply 'artistic' in any pure, idiomatic sense). If the mastery of representational skills appears to have allowed the artist to emerge against the object as an inventive individual and autopic authority, that emergence is nonetheless superscripted, as analysis of *cartellini* might suggest. In general, the notion of an inventive individual and expressive artistic personality is one which appears to counteract the idea that art production might be standardised. When the rhetoric of invention is dominant, signatures are accepted as signs which validate the uniqueness of artworks and artists. In the previous Chapter, the concept of artistic personality as a single point of collection was addressed in the context of the those 'fictitious' artists desired and constructed by art historians, who read notional traces of invention and idiosyncracy as evidence of creative coherence in and across artworks. Concomitantly, the concept of invention was read as a device through which Renaissance artists are differentiated from their Medieval predecessors in terms of self-awareness and personal 'boldness'.

This thesis is not predicated on an in-depth, philosophical interrogation of the 'subject' but, in default readings of artists's signatures from the Renaissance onwards, 'subjectivity' is held to empower the signatory to make a signature. Thus, the artistic *subject* is empowered to use signature to authenticate and designate *artistic* production (whatever the means of production may be). If signature is indicative of 'lowest common denominator' authorship, the signature of an empowered artistic subject is not necessarily indicative of creativity. Derrida does not subscribe to the determining power of authorial or artistic intent and holds the question of 'intention' for speech acts, and signature testifies to speech acts, to be spurious - a beguiling conceit which covers a relentless and unforgiving functionality with the guise of totality, integrity and ('creative' or 'political') control. As an expression of the subject, the involvement of invention with constructions of 'personality' would seem to produce methods of individuating artists in ways that are incompatible anything designed to standardize and guarantee aspects of superstructural production. Personality, at least in the modern sense, implies that issues of interior life, spirituality and pyschology are determinants of a human being's irreducible singularity. Derrida demonstrates that signature can never manifest 'wholeness' or an integrated version of being because 'being' is not a state of singularity (it is an explosion of frames). The production of an *aide-memoire* necessiates the 'sender/signatory' becoming absent to the self and the signing subject at this most effective moment of surrogacy is shown to be incomplete, infected, never pure. The Derridean subject is a 'dehiscence' - signature is an extension, a surrogate, a prosthetic and proxy that cannot seal intent anymore than it can autonomously mark creativity.

Artistic personality is a difficult issue to tackle, situated as it is as a *dynamis* at the boundaries drawn between life and work; individual and society; private and public realms. It is easy to forget that personality is a historically contingent concept, especially given the centrality of the place it occupies in the modern and contemporary formulations of what an artist is and does. Williams included 'personality' as one of the terms he analysed in *Keywords*. He recounts that the roots of 'personality' derive from dual Latin roots - *persona*, which was used to indicate actor's masks - and *personalitas* - which conveyed the sense of a being that was a 'person not a thing', (it could also be used to indicate personal property).[364] 'Genius' has a similar and sympathetic dual root in *ingenio* and *genius*.[365] Williams links the etymology of personality to notions of 'character' and 'individuality', with the former etymologically connected to the Latin *character* - a word used to describe an instrument for engraving or impressing, and which has significance for Agamben's understanding of signature - and the latter (given its own entry in *Keywords*) to the Latin *indiviuus*, a word which gives onto the notion of indivisibility. These are terms that orbit signature as something that is the same but different. Williams notes that the meaning of 'personality' moves 'from a general to a specific or unique quality', though there is not scope in *Keywords* to explain how this historical variation occurs within the concept of indivisibility, (e.g. the modern personality as an indivisible individual). The trajectory from genre-defined generality to specificity is one that is

364 Williams, op. cit, p233

365 Ibid, p143. In this sympathy, 'invention' can be paralleled with 'mask', and 'genus/family' with 'property'.

prominently marked in the function of the artist, and the impossibility of the indivisible individual is what Derrida brings forward in his dealings with signature.

The concept of artistic personality has required certain scaffoldings in its development, including marking the importance of technical skill; the elevation of the artist in social hierarchies; the establishment and reiteration of doxographical inheritances; reliance on myths of genius and on anecdotal narratives that construct exception as a feature of creativity. Kris & Kurz's work on Classical sources for Renaissance biographical leitmotifs is relevant to any analysis of how the idea of personality came to occupy a central place in the make-up of the artist.[366] Though it does not tackle the issue of signature *per se* or really develop any analysis of it, Kris & Kurz credit signature with breaching anonymity prior to the establishment of the fully fledged, artistic subject:

> The rare instances of an artist's fame in the early Middle Ages always hark back to antiquity; wherever in the Romanesque or Gothic periods a breach of the tradition of artistic anonymity occurs - beginning, as before, with the appearance of artists' signatures - the formal characteristics of the work of art are borrowed from Classical sources. Finally in the late Middle Ages, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the figure of the artist emerges on the historical scene and gains independent stature in every way, biography of the artist as an independent entity emerges as well. [367]

Kris & Kurz recast some of the apparently fallacious aspects of Vasari's *Lives* as doxographical precedent and advance a reading of Vasari that views his hyperbole not as poor scholarship, rather as a necessary method. Thus, the noticeable occurrence of fixed

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366 Kris & Kurz, op. cit.

367 Ibid. p5-6

biographical themes in the histories of Renaissance artists indicate to Kris & Kurz that the history of art has proceeded mythopoetically from 'the threshold of written history', and that, in general, the urge to name an artist demonstrates that the (art) work no longer serves a religious or ritualistic purpose: rather, the work is a 'creative achievement'.[368] On this point, Osbourne's work demonstrates that this is not a universally applicable rule: there is no necessary incompatibility between 'naming' and 'ritual'. Similarly, where signatures are supplications, 'naming' has an important religious purpose. With this caveat in mind, it is true to say that signatory names are necessary in the construction of artworks and the history of artworks because naming and signature permit chronology. It is temporal linearity that attenuates cultural artefacts as art along chronological lines under the guise of 'creative achievement'. To clarify, individuation of the artist by name does not generate chronology as a necessary consequence, but chronology is one of the functions that individuation allows. One of the things Kris & Kurz demonstrate in the course of their analysis is the fallacy that marks names and signatures as self-contained points of origin or 'personality' in the attenuations of chronology. Biographical anecdotes and accounts of Giotto's life have many points of connection with the biography of Lysippus, which itself was commingled with themes from Homeric epic:

> The fragments of the earliest Greek biographies of artists that can be reconstructed from subsequent borrowings all stem from a period in which the figure of the artist had only just emerged from the realm of myth; they preserve the conception and many elements of myths and transmit them to posterity… Pliny drew on both the biographical and doxographical traditions of Greece. He conferred a dual role on artists, attempting to honour the innovator for inventing a particular technique or making a particular advance,

[368] Ibid. p4

> and yet to set out as detailed pupil-teacher genealogies as possible. Pliny's method formed one of the bridges across which this basic conception was transmitted to subsequent historical writings. We encounter this constellation at the very beginning of modern biography of artists in modern times - in the famous story of Giotto's youth.[369]

Giotto is not merely 'Giotto', he is also Lysippus, and he is also Odysseus. It is possible to see the operation of the Derridean abyss in this: just as the application of the name 'Vincent' to a painting of some old shoes allows various 'truth' claims to be made, Giotto's name and signature potentially brings a range of leitmotifs and anecdotes into view. If invention can be visibly appreciated in the demonstration of skill, or rationalized as technological progress, (Van Eyck's 'discovery' of oil painting), when it is seen as a mythic link - biographical and doxographical - between, for example, Giotto and the revered artists of antiquity, it is allied to, and justifies, the artist's naturalism in order that he might be constructed as recognizably and intrinsically 'exceptional' and talented. In its genesis, artistic 'personality' is superscripted or underwritten by precedents relayed informally and stealthily as anecdotes. The leitmotifs that Kris & Kurz write about are ways of rationalising 'talent', making it safe to appreciate.

6.1.6 FAME

Lysippus was Alexander's 'official' sculptor and Appelles his 'official' painter, and some of the anecdotes detailed by Kris & Kurz exploit these connections. Connections between

[369] Ibid. pp21-22

Lysippus, Appelles and Alexander involve 'personalities' that were contemporaneous, and what works to establish doxographical inheritances across centuries also works to open channels of value between simultaneous individuals. To some extent, Lysippus, Appelles and Alexander profit by association. In his study of fame, Leo Braudy contends that these artists, whose work is reputed from copies and anecdotes, (so there is no 'original' work extant), are substantiated as 'great' because it was Alexander who commissioned them to make work in the wake his first victories.[370] A 'great' man himself, Alexander recognised and could afford superior talent; Appelles and Lysippus basked in his aura as he was vindicated by the monuments and images they constructed for him. This vital circuit of fame and profit is a short-circuit in which the recognized names of all parties conduct glory and honour as exception and value.

Braudy's history demonstrates that fame, like art, is a commingling of myth and history. Braudy recognizes 'The Homeric Pattern' and Odysseus as deliberate and determining precedents for Alexander's self-creation and epochal pursuit of fame, (fame is something that Alexander had to work to create rather than receive or experience), and he recognizes the instrumental place art and monumentalisation played in that. From Braudy's perspective, the history of fame is in no small sense a history of art, so entwined are the practices of image-making with the construction of fame and reputation. Considering the Renaissance, Braudy contemplates the issue of artists' signatures directly:

> The supposed anonymity of medieval artists is part of a genial nineteenth century myth about a golden age before commercial ambitiousness ruined art. Artists have signed

[370] Braudy, L. *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1986) pp45-46

> works and their names have been known ever since art reached beyond the local village to a market where someone might admire the work but might not know where to get his own version of it. A signature on a piece of Greek pottery for example, where so many of the names of the earliest artists are found, was part publicity and part contract, displaying the patron's taste in his purchase from so renown a master and guaranteeing the work by the master's own name... From our point of view, every Greek artist painting the gods on a krater and every celebrator of the pharaoh in stone was adding a nuance to the visual terminology of divinity.[371]

Braudy noticeably connects signatures to 'export' in a conceptual sense and also to issues of status and guarantee. Given the scope of his project and angle from which he approaches it, Braudy has not conducted in-depth research into artists's signatures. Consequently, he relies on several naturalized assumptions about them, the most telling of which in this passage produces the elision between 'signature', 'art' and 'painting' in Greek pottery, (the inference being that it is the painter, not the potter who is the 'artist'). When he considers Renaissance artists, he suggests that the intention of artists when they signed works from the 15th century onwards was qualitatively different to those that preceded them, principally because artists were less constricted by guilds and were more mobile:

> ...if he dared and had talent, he could travel to gather inspiration from other artists and art works, to seek out new patrons, and to become a member of an international class called "artists". For the artists, signatures became calling cards. For the patron, the signature made the painting a more valuable possession, and the most prestige-sensitive rulers

[371] Ibid. p282-283

began to collect artists as well. The pilgrimage to Italy and to Rome became an important part of the education of any artist of aspiration...[372]

Trade monograms were, of course, important precedents for artists's signatures, but interestingly, Braudy links signature to 'export' - here, it is artists themselves who travel, (as opposed to artworks). They become 'pilgrims', individuals on personal Odysseys, (in pursuit of fame), and Braudy reflects the view that the Reniassance signature segued with personal daring, talent and novelty.

Braudy also alludes to the place of the 'connoisseur' in artists' signatory practice, suggesting that the connoisseur's habit of 'collecting' promoted it. This is an allusion that cannot be taken at face value - certainly by the 16th century, there is evidence to suggest that 'prestige-sensitive rulers' and connoisseurs were increasingly averse to signatures on artworks, preferring gestural 'tells'. Signature has a more convincing relationship with speculative markets than with court patrons. So, although Giotto is known to have signed some of his work - for example, the *Stefaneschi Triptych* (c.1320) bears his name as does *St. Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata* (c.1290) - these works are 'generally regarded as school pieces bearing his trademark, whereas the *Ognissanti Madonna*, unsigned and virtually undocumented, is so superlative in quality that it is accepted as entirely by his hand.'[373] Here, signature is a mark of an inferior product, something produced by a workshop and not wholly determined by the artist's hand. It is read as a

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372 Ibid. p283

373 Murray, P. J. 'Giotto Di Bondone' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008) http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/234069/Giotto-di-Bondone, (accessed 27th July, 2013)

mark associated with 'trade' rather than vocational talent, which is ideally unsullied by commerce.

What becomes clear reading Braudy is that Renaissance individuation of artists can be seen to be part of a general trend manifest in religion and politics as well as culture. In other words, Renaissance artists were no more individuated or self-conscious than any other 'profession': individuation was a pose within the cultural mores of the day, so to mark the signatures of artists during the Renaissance as indicative of exception on the basis of an advanced self-awareness is somewhat misleading. What is read as a signal of differentiation from a class of 'anonymous' artisans can also also be read as a sign of affiliation with others engaged in the pursuit of fame in public life which enjoyed a superstructural revivification at the time:

> The imagistic preoccupation with fame from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries therefore indicates the way that artists identified their cultural importance with that of the public men they celebrated...[374]

During the Renaissance, artists's signatures deployed in cities and in *public*: this is an important condition to remember, (artists are not merely or primarily signing work in private supplication). It is a condition of signature that Camille's analysis of 13th century marginalia underwrites to some extent. The relative visibility of artists's signatures appears to turn on the proximity and structural anonymity of the critical masses described by urban populations, the division of labour precipitated in cities, and the presence of a number of trade competitors. Once again, the pragmatic considerations which precipate signature are located in everday life, not within the idiom of painting or sculpture.

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[374] Braudy, op. cit. p286

In those histories that seek the emergence of the artist-genius in the Renaissance, fame is seen to follow to the artist's desire to be credited for creative achievements. Vasari says that Michelangelo signed his *Pietà* because it had been mistakenly attributed to another sculptor and Michelangelo wanted to claim renown for himself.[375] Influenced by Vasari, those signatures which appear in art made during or after the Renaissance are read retrospectively in the same vein and signature is seen to mark the pursuit of recognition. Investigating beyond this assumption reveals signatory practice as less an individual, creative expression than a social practice: if signatures mark 'invention' and 'glory', they simultaneously mark tradition and locale.

6.1.7 ANONYMITY

Fame exists as the antonym of anonymity, a topic that has already been broached in relation to the production of icons and the *St Bartholomew Altarpiece*. Anonymity is a huge topic in itself, and an extended consideration of it here is not possible. Suffice to say that framing material and visual culture around the concept of fungibility or substitutionality, rather than the elevation and suppression of talent, inflects the conceptualisation of anonymity. Consequently, the conventional grounds for conceptualising the artistic subject are somehwat displaced. When artefacts are fungible, artists, artisans, donors etc. are essentially irrelevant, so the question of their being

375 Vasari, op. cit. p425

anonymous or extra-historical is not germane, (objects are more important than people). It is in the hierarchical attenuations of linear time and in the urbanisation of populations that the relationship between the artist, donor and artwork (mutually individuated) seems to require signature (public or private). That is not to discount the possibility that when artefacts are fungibile and artists are 'anonymous', signatures (or more specifically the idea of signatures) cannot be seen to play a role in intertextual performance, a point Osbourne makes in relation to Greek pottery and North makes in relation to the complex authorial stances to be found in Renaissance literature.

The conventional position in art historical narrative is to understand the condition of artistic anonymity as a condition of the Middle Ages, and consequently, it denies a more nuanced understanding of the interxtuality of authorship. Anonymity is condition can be pitched against the individuation of the artist because the Medieval artwork, (which, in the scheme of substitutionality, has an integrity preventing it from ever being anonymous), is approached from a position in which the artist is more important than the object, so, the historical default is to read the anonymity of the artist as inevitable and 'primordial' when it deals with Medieval artefacts (or artworks). In the pejorative judgments of 19th and 20th century art historians, Medieval art is seen to have acquired anonymity from the high achievements of Classical forebears as a result of poor craftsmanship and intellectual laxity.[376]

[376] See Gibbons, E. *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman empire*. (London: Penguin, 2005)

At this point, Kubler's work *The Shape of Time* suggests itself because Kubler concerns himself with the issue of 'invention' and 'individuation' at the level of 'prime objects' rather than human artists, (who thus ought to be relegated to anonymity).[377] Kubler believes that undue attention has been paid to biographical imperatives in art history, and that this has been exacerbated by the metaphorical shaping of history in the 19th century as a rational, evolutionary process. Kubler appreciates the somewhat arbitrary nature of individual 'success' in art:

> Each man's lifework is also a work in a series extending beyond him in either or both directions, depending upon his position in the track he occupies. To the usual coordinates fixing the individual's position - his temperament and his training - there is also the moment of his *entrance*, this being the moment in tradition - early, middle or late - with which his biological opportunity coincides.[378]

For Kubler, the issue of entrance determines the extent to which invention and creative achievement can be credited to an individual. Derrida's understanding of signature has some bearing on theorizing this kind of entrance because as the *moment* of insertion into tradition, 'entrance' is like signature, (always requiring countersignature; impossible to contain within a moment). When Kubler mentions artists's signatures, it is to rebut the (apparent) assumption that signatures necessarily mark important works:

> Signatures and dates inscribed upon works of art by their authors in no way assure us that they are prime. Most works of art, moreover, are anonymous, and they fall naturally into large groups. Under most circumstance the prime objects have disappeared under the mass of replicas, where their discovery is most difficult and problematic...[379]

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377 Kubler, op. cit.
378 Ibid. p6
379 Ibid. p44

For Kubler, entrance is not as important as conventional art histories would have it - he wants to expunge the artist's signature from art history's toolbox. Despite his protestations against the biographical imperative in art history (signified, for him, by signature), Kubler wishes to assert prime objects as coherent points of origin and in this he imitates the signatory process: he merely shifts the focus from the artist (back) to the object. If there is a case for stating that the artist emerges against the object during the Renaissance, the value of Kubler's theory is to raise the possibility that this emergence was *the realignment of the signatory process*, rather than its commencement in any absolute sense. Kubler's prime objects may be read as 'ur-signatures' and in this respect, there is a sympathy with Foucauldian transdiscursivity: Kubler is in pursuit of the prime object as the visual equivalent of an '-ism' since prime objects are those objects which beget new series and an '-ism' 'abstracts and essentializes a corpus of originary texts as it institutes the hermeneutic spirit that they demand'.[380] Ultimately, like Beazley, like Berenson, Kubler dispenses with artists's signatures in favour of constructive anonymity because individual signatures are too particular, inconsistent and troublesome to fit with the ur-signature and narrative he wishes to promote.

[380] Greek - *ισμα(τ-)*, (Latin -isma) expressed the finished act or thing done: *-ism* consigns to the past. '-ism, suffix'. OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/100006?isAdvanced=false&result=2&rskey=VnRHlI& (accessed 27th July, 2013).

6.1.8 GESTURE

Insistent on the value of hand-craft in the genesis of prime objects, Kubler nevertheless chooses to ignore the theoretical issue of 'gesture' in *The Shape of Time*. Of all the devices that individuation employs, as a sum-zero empiricism, gesture is the most reductive and unarguable. If personality renders the subject an indivisible individual, in art that indivisibility is expressed generically in the gestural trace of physical engagement with material. In art, skill and gesture can appear to have an intimate relationship: the practice of former enables the latter, (as in the case of Chinese calligraphy and watercolour painting). Conversely, talent manifests gesture in that quotient of skill that cannot be copied, learnt or practiced, (and is thus 'God-given'). Gesture and skill exist together in mutually dependent paradox, divided by their relationship to repetition. Inevitably, given the premium placed on individuation, during the Renaissance the balance swings towards 'unrepeatable' talent rather than 'repetitive' skill as a method for discerning gesture and value in artworks, so by the 16th century, artworks are appreciated on the basis of *sprezzatura*.

The relationship between gesture, chance and materiality has not only been presented as 'unreadable', but used to vindicate the vicissitudes of artistic 'success' by means of rationalising 'luck' and 'talent' - 'chance' and 'gesture' are recurrent themes in the anecdotes analysed by Kris & Kurz. When gesture, (which does not admit correction), is seen to irreducibly embody the trace of talent and exception through material - in the brushstrokes of a painting, for example - the appending of a written signature is not only

unnecessary but too obvious for connoisseur-initiates, privy (by virtue of their own superior aesthetic experiences) to recognising the superiority of an artwork or the handiwork of specific individuals on the basis of a developed 'eye'. This is aesthetic appreciation as aristocratic virtue. The concept of *sprezzatura* relies upon the variability in visibility that superficially illegible, unwritten signatures (signatory gestures) permit.

Gesture is heavily implicated in the Romantic construction of genius which promoted the assumptions of individual creative omnipotence. As the unrepeatable, physical trace of a particular individual working in a particular way at a particular time according to his or her own determination, it might be read as marking an 'event', and the event appears to oppose standardisation. Ideologically, in the 17th and 18th centuries, as industrialization began to replace the artisan with the machine operator, the skills associated with artisan-craft were understood to be 'reproducible'. In parallel, in art, a concomitant premium was placed on those skills which were valued as 'unreproducible'. Gesture, already the vehicle for the expression and recognition of genius, was gradually recognised as the vehicle for unreproducibility at a material level *per se*. The involvement of gesture in the ideology surrounding industrialization, the reproducibility of manual skills and the alienation of man by machine, are implicated in the construction of artistic labour as exemplary and unalienated. The artistic subject (an indivisible individual) covers all production processes involved in the realisation of an artwork. Any division of labour is hidden from view. Art seems to present work as an opportunity to resist the 'commodity' because it appears to allow all of its moments of production to be determined by the

artist's subjectivity.[381] The artist overwrites production so it is presumed that the work of art cannot be standardised. Ironically, given its relationship to the hand and 'touch', gesture trades on a notional ability to infuse artworks with an 'intangible' quality, and of course, in order to be recognised this quality has to operate exactly like signature, (there is no more tethering to source in a characteristic sweeping brushstroke than there is an enigmatic paraph). For the Renaissance connoisseur, who became antipathetic to immediately legible, vulgar names on artworks, gesture (as *sprezzatura* and *maniera*) offered the satisfaction of tying the artwork to knowledge that is reserved elsewhere, (i.e. the identity of the artist, other works by the artist, other works by other artists and the characteristics of specific 'schools'). In this an artist's characteristic gesture is merely a less accessible signature and admits standardization in the need for attribution.

6.2 SIGNATURE AS DESTINATION

Considering the pursuit of fame, Braudy mentions the lure of Italy and Rome for artists of 'talent and ambition', and in doing so, he hints at an incipient connection between travel - the 'export of artists' - and signatures. Renaissance signatures act much like landmarks. Like Braudy, Wood - discussing the fame of Dürer and his predecessor, Martin Schöngauer - touches upon the 'landmark' function of signature:

> Martin Schöngauer was the first famous German artist, because of his initials. Initials and other marks on prints were originally marks for trade insiders, quality control, meant to be inconspicuous. On early prints they are never expanded into full names. With

[381] Roberts, op.cit.

> Schöngauer, who began monogramming prints in the early 1470s, the initials became a signature, for his fame was such that everyone, or at least quite a lot of people, could expand the initials into a name. The initials became a return address, literally a destination for a young artist like Dürer. [382]

Wood's metaphorical description of Schöngauer's monogram as a return address is not incidental. The relationship between signature and destination is an important one: genius, afterall, is founded in the 'spirit of place'. In its descent as a mark of authority, signature inherits a geographical function which ultimately allows the artwork to operate nomadically. Those art historical narratives that accept the Renaissance as an era of singular 'greatness' formulated at the level of personal individuation and creative self-consciousness, suppress signature's pragmatic geographical lineage. Matthew's study of *cartellini* reveals the geographical connection, as does Wood's analysis of *authentica*, which assesses them as correctives for the inadequacy of 'place' and 'thing'. Wood lays bare the circumstances which contributed to the increasingly adopted mobile and portable forms adopted by Renaissance artworks. Artworks retain the vestiges of their origin 'in place'.

Derrida says that as an aperture effect, signature is 'topologically assignable' and that in signature, 'nothing will have taken place but the place'.[383] In his post 9/11 interview with Giovanni Borrardi, Derrida discusses the means by which 'September 11' crystallises as

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382 Wood, *Forgery Replica Fiction* op. cit. p347

383 Dissemination, op.cit. p327

a destination/designation.[384] These 'means' are signatory processes and it is worth quoting at length what he says:

> …to be an event that truly marks, that truly makes its mark, a singular and, as they say here, 'unprecedented' event… 'To mark a date in history' presupposes, in any case, that 'something' comes or happens for the first and last time… 'Something' took place, we have the feeling of not having seen it coming, and certain consequences undeniably follow upon the 'thing'. But this very thing, the place and meaning of this 'event', remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept, like a unicity with no generality on the horizon or with no horizon at all, out of range for a language that admits its powerlessness and so is reduced to pronouncing mechanically a date, repeating it endlessly, as a kind of ritual incantation, a conjuring poem, a journalistic litany or rhetorical refrain that admits to not knowing what it's talking about. We do not in fact know what we are saying or naming in this way: September 11, *le 11 septembre,* September 11. The brevity of the appellation (September 11, 9/11) stems not only from an economic or rhetorical necessity. The telegram of this metonymy- a name, a number - points out the unqualifiable by recognizing that we do not recognize or even cognize that we do not yet know how to qualify, that we do not know what we are talking about. [385]

In a similar fashion, in his novel *White Noise*, Don De Lillo neatly encapsulates the interplay between geographic and signatory processes when he describes the 'Most Photographed Barn in America':

> 'No one sees the barn,' he said finally. A long silence followed. 'Once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn.' He fell silent once more. People with cameras left the elevated site, replaced by others. 'We're not here to

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[384] Borrardi, G. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

[385] Ibid. pp85-86

> capture an image, we're here to maintain one. Every photograph reinforces the aura. Can you feel it, Jack? An accumulation of nameless energies.' There was an extended silence. The man in the booth sold postcards and slides. 'Being here is a kind of spiritual surrender. We see only what the others see. The thousands who were here in the past, those who will come in the future. We've agreed to be part of a collective perception. It literally colours our vision. A religious experience in a way, like all tourism.' Another silence ensued.[386]

Place is established by repetition. When the 'event' becomes familiar it is as place, and geographical designation is revealed as a signatory process, opening, for example, onto historically delimited ideas concerning the 'picturesque'. The notion of the 'picturesque' was formulated in the 18th century, contemporaneously to the establishment of Grand Tour itineraries with their emphasis on recognisable attractions.[387] The picturesque turns upon the determination of the 'best' (i.e. singular) viewpoint from which to experience a landscape.[388] Through its relationship to viewpoint, the picturesque belies a relationship to signature.

The issue of 'convenience' - the convenience afforded by landmarks and 'views' - is an important one for signature and is allied to abbreviation, 'short-hand'. In Foucault's Renaissance *épistème,* 'convenience' (*convenienta*) describes a form of similitude based on physical proximity. When physical proximity is challenged - as it is when the *authenticum*, separated from its relic-substrate, is put into circulation and becomes the

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386 De Lillo, D. *White Noise* (New York, NY: Viking, 1985) p8 (I would like to thank Dr. Anna McLauchlan for drawing my attention to this).

387 See Gilpin, W. *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape…* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1808).

388 Though it also turns on adopting the correct attitude.

template for the modern work of art - one of the functions of the document is to impute 'convenience', in the sense of restating a specific propinquity and origin. The testimony of the document - and the signatures which verify documents - supplants the material evidence of place, (which is ideally experienced directly). Signature aspires, ultimately unsuccessfully, to carry *the integrity of place* (or person) within itself.

6.2.1 THE GRAND TOUR

The picturesque developed as a correlate to tourism. The Grand Tour - an extended trip to visit famous sites and ruins in the Southern Mediterranean - was established in 18th century Europe. By this time, the fame of Renaissance artists was widespread enough to attract the attention not only of 'artists of talent and ambition', but of those wealthy individuals generally engaged on the Tour. For Tourists, the signatures of artists performed as landmarks and were seen by some to have a detrimental effect on the educative potential of the artworks that carried them. Coupled with the general character of the Tourists (who lack expertise or Fine Art training), the signatures of artists appear to separate from the image or object and progress forward, with the consequence that the physical, visual substrate is relegated to the background. Signatures interfere with the act of contemplative aesthetic appreciation, which retains an enigmatic quality. The English painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, complained in a letter written during travels in Italy about the behaviour of Tourists:

> Instead of examining the beauties of the works of fame, and why they are esteemed, they only enquire the subject of a picture, and where it is found, and write that down. Some Englishmen while I was in the Vatican came there and spent about six hours in writing down whatever the antiquary dictated to them. They scarcely looked at the paintings the whole time.[389]

Reynolds's opinion expresses one problem with artists's signatures: like the 'subject' of a painting, they risk becoming more important, more 'visible' than the work they relate to and not only do they prevent any 'objective' aesthetic appreciation, they are a siren-like distraction from the presence of the artwork. This is the same criticism that Panofsky makes of Van Eyck's signature on the *Arnolfini Portrait*; that Seidel makes in relation to the signature of Gislebertus at Autun, and that Kubler makes in general. It is a criticism of signature's ability to accelerate encounters and information. Once more, signatures are seen to act as 'short-circuits'. The bourgeois vulgarity of Tourist-Philistines, who want immediate access to knowledge without devoting time to learning, is not only a vulgarity despised by educated aristocrats who appreciate *sprezzatura*, it relays the fear of Thaumus that Derrida describes in Plato's Pharmacy. The issue is one of pace.

6.2.2 COUNTERFEITING

Like many travelling artists in Italy in the 18th century, Reynolds acted as a dealer as well as an artist. The synthesis of these roles was common enough, and Reynolds had many

[389] Denvir, B. *The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design & Society 1689 – 1789*, (London: Longman, 1983) p9

varied first-hand dealings with Tourists.[390] Bernard Denvir refers to Horace Walpole's view of the Grand Tour's affect on Italy, which swarmed with: 'picture jobbers… importing, by ship loads, Dead Christs, Holy Families, Madonnas and other dark dismal subjects, on which they scrawl the names of Italian masters.'[391] Denvir carries on to say:

> … a whole host of Jacobite refugees such as Andrew Lumisden and Robert Strange, who supplemented their meager salaries or pensions they received from the Stuarts by dabbling in the sale of paintings and classical statues. Behind these dealers were the native Italian painters and sculptors 'restoring' Greek and Roman statues, faking Leonardos and Guido Renis, or sometimes, as with the immensely successful Pompeo Batoni, painting portraits of visiting Milords.[392]

In Denvir's view, the vulgarity of the legible, trade-piece signature is connected to the explicit opportunities for counterfeit. Unlike the more dissolute gestures carried in *sprezzatura* or *maniera*, written signatures have a *prima facie* legibility and tightly designed self-similar forms that quite explicitly permit 'passing off'. In Derridean terms, signature always already requires countersignature - a counterfeit of itself - in order to become effective. This necessary division makes room for fraud as well as legibility. It is easier to copy a tightly described paraph than it is to sustain a convincing gestural imitation, so often for curators and dealers, the presence of a signature on an artwork raises suspicion, rather than providing reassurance.

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390 Skinner, B.C. *Scots in Italy in the 18th century*. (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1966)

391 Denvir, op.cit. p8

392 Ibid.

Nicholas Barker says, in relation to a group of fakes and forgeries which have made their way into the British Museum:

> The final strand in the story… is the new demand for the 'autograph'… The substitution of hand-made signs, by definition none the same, for the hieratic uniformity of seal, *tughra*, paraph, mason's mark or brand was a product of Renaissance humanism. The concept of personality spread from the writing of a name to the individuality expressed in the making of any artefact.[393]

Although artistic gesture also becomes recognisable through a signatory process of comparison, the methods of stylistic comparisons are more diffuse with the result that the opportunities for deliberate fraud are relatively more complex. Until the advent of highly scientific, technological analyses of the physical processes and materials which constitute artworks (work on pigments, for example), recognition and verification of artist style by experts was the highest test of authenticity available. In a speculative market or a trade in antiques (as opposed to a market which proceeds on the basis of commission), unscrupulous artists and dealers can pass-off inferior goods to unenlightened and unexperienced clients by the devious application of a 'fake' signature, or by bearing false witness. Fake signatures work by fulfilling the expectations of clients, utilising signature's apparent ability to speed up delivery of information, and in this respect they point to standardisation as an operational ideal within art.

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[393] Jones. op. cit. p25

6.2.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

The magnetic qualities that Reynolds saw signatures exerting over Tourist-Philstines conspire to make signatures conduits for familiarity and convenience. They are short-cuts and an anathema to proper education, the device of Sophists. The 'fake Leonardos and Guido Renis' produced by picture-jobbers are connected by Denvir to the flourishing trade in importing Italian paintings to England. England was at the forefront of industrialisation and embourgeoisment in the 18th century. Denvir suggests that this gave rise to an associated need to furnish newly built or extended mansions:

> Whereas in the seventeenth century there were about twenty English art collectors of importance, by the middle of the eighteenth there must have been well over two hundred, and they were no longer confined to the aristocracy. [394]

The question of how the new cadre of collectors negotiated their way towards building a collection is one that is intimately bound together with the development of Grand Tourism and the role signatures play as landmarks. Signatures appear to allow uncultured industrialists to acquire culture, becoming landmarks in itineraries and travelogues like Jonathan Richardson the Elder's *An Account of Some of the Statues, Bas-Reliefs, Drawings, and Pictures in Italy* (1722), Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) and the etchings of Giovanni Piranesi, which were instrumental in shaping the developing body of knowledge related to issues of artistic taste, (the developing science of aesthetics). In the 18th century, taste and Tourism were in a symbiotic relationship. If *sprezzatura* notionally dissolved the literal signature in the 16th century,

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394 Ibid. p.7

the combination of Grand Tourism and growing Academicism seems to have reasserted it in the centuries that followed.

The establishment of these collections relied on the familiarity of markers provided by signatures, biographies and itineraries. These same markers, which on a functional level permit counterfeits, (permission that, in a 'hot' market, encourages opportunists to exploit signatures), are noticeable in narratives connected with the establishment of state collections too. Jenny Graham links the revival of Van Eyck's reputation to the Grand Tour circuit, the growth of connoisseurship in the 18th century and the literary narration of art history by pioneering commentators such as Andre Félibien, whom she notes brought Van Eyck's name into the lexicon of the French Academy with the publication of *Entretiens sur les vies et les ouvrages de plus excellens peintures*.[395] Graham does not discuss Van Eyck's signatory practice in any great detail, but she notes that Van Eyck's signature on the *Portrait of a Man with a Red Turban* (1433) 'with its perceived proofs of great age and celebrity authorship', had enough cachet to prompt forgery of 'Van Eycks' as early as the 1720s: *The Enthronement of St Romold of Malines*, was given a Van Eyck signature and a date of 1421 in the 1720s (probably) by William Sykes, a 'noted trickster'.[396] In particular, Graham looks at the way the reputation of Van Eyck was resurrected during the 19th century and became considered a 'proto-modern' artist. She attributes the 'worldwide celebrity' that Van Eyck enjoys today principally to the work of

[395] Graham, J. *Inventing Van Eyck: The remaking of an artist for the Modern Age* (Oxford: Berg, 2007) p24
[396] Ibid. p39

Jean-Baptiste Descamps.[397] When Napoleon directed his army to loot panels, they did so on the basis of Descamps's scholarship and the 'booty', including the *Ghent Altarpiece*, was put on display in the Louvre. Ensconced in museums and public collections, artworks were not only overwritten by institutional imprimaturs, but established in the imaginations of the growing 'publics' for art too: '[The] Arnolfini portrait in particular carrying Van Eyck's name to a new audience when it made its debut at London's National Gallery in 1843 to crowds of visitors…'[398]

6.2.4 19th CENTURY SIGNATORY PRACTICE

Van Eyck's elevation to art historical prominence during the 19th century is simultaneous with a time in which artists's signatures took a fully fledged vernacular, calligraphic form and were cemented in position as autographs. Reviewing the Joconde database which holds information relating to the collections of some 300 French Museums, Charlotte Guichard observes that during the 17th and 18th centuries, signatory practice was irregular, seemingly dictated by the whim of the (individual) artist.[399] It was, according to Guichard, only in the 19th century that signatory practice became more systematic. Her contention is that this is due to the interlinked development of the art market, (antiquarian) connoisseurship and the establishment of new museums which benefited (in

397 Ibid. p5
398 Ibid. p6
399 Guichard, C. 'La signature dans le tableau aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: identité, réputation et marché de l'art' *Sociétés & Représentations* 1 (2008) pp47-77

France) from the seizure and dispersal of aristocratic art collections. At this time, discussion about the authenticity of artworks in Museums took on a public character and the significance of artists's signatures was newly prominent.[400] In the second half of the 18th century, attribution became more important than 'aesthetic' consideration, because the artist's name as *la griffe* (a 'label') had a transformative, magic quality, propagated in part by the desire to catalogue and list paintings as objects for sale in the dispersal of aristocratic collections.[401]

Keen to stabilize the irregular practice of signature within an objective framework prior to the 19th century, Guichard looks to its appearance in *morceaux de réception* between 1648 and 1793. *Morceaux de réception* are paintings or sculptures which were supposed to demonstrate the artist's technical and intellectual accomplishment, acquired through training at L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, on the occasion of the artist's admission to L'Academie Royale. Guichard notes that until 1750, these paintings were almost never signed; in the 1750s, 3 out of 30 *morceaux* were signed; in the 1760s, the proportion was 7 signed out of 26; in the 1780s, 10 from 37. By her account, during the second half of the 18th century, the proportion of signed paintings submitted to the Academy was small but growing, and she suggests that in the absence of a larger statistical analysis, the habits of the Academicians can be used as the basis for forming a view of artists's habits more broadly.

400 Ibid. p52
401 Ibid. p57

Guichard concentrates her analysis on the practice of two French, 18th century genre painters - Joseph Vernet and François Boucher. She contends that Vernet, a prolific painter of seascapes who frequently signed his work, exploited his association with prestigious, public commissions by assiduously applying his signature on work for private sale. Subsequently, collectors buying Vernet's paintings paid for 'his name' and he became symbolically associated with the fashionable, cultivated élite in France. Boucher similarly made his signature an element of value in his pastoral allegories. In Guichard's reading of signature, market awareness is put before self-expression, assertions of skill or creative pride. She contends that the signatory habits of Vernet and Boucher (and by extension artists like them) cannot be read in opposition to 'artisanal' practice, in fact, their practice is 'inscribed in corporate traditions'.[402] Signature is in this analysis, not a practice that developed within the idiom or expressive space of painting. If the Renaissance saw the integration of signature within the image as *trompe l'oeil* illustrations of skill, for Guichard, the 18th century marks the time when signature is noticeably released from the representative schema of paintings and its equivalence to an artisan's mark is unmasked. There is a noticeable and increasing heterogeneity between image and signature. Accompanying such hetereogenity is an increasing use of vernacular spelling, the gradual abandonment of qualifying words like *faciebat*, *pinxit*, *fecit* etc. and the 'triumph' of cursive script, which is more personal and discrete than a signature written in Roman capitals.

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402 Ibid. p53 (cf. McGregor and the painters of Sèvres)

Guichard remarks on the increasingly 'notaristic' form of signatures.[403] Bracketing artists's signatures with those of notaires, Guichard shares an approach with Smith and Seidel, who remark on the notaristic aspects of Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* signature. The autographic value of the manuscript signature is precisely what allows the assumptions that underscore the conceptual understanding of signature as a unique tethering to source to become naturalized. The apparent ubiquity of handwritten signatures in the 19th and 20th centuries, (in art and in 'everyday' life - general literacy in Europe improved at this time), and the concomitant desire to seal the (signing) subject as an expressive, empowered individual, established the autograph as a form which presented itself as immemorial, beyond history. The individual is held to become accountable in everyday life (through the signature) parallel to becoming an expressive and creative personality in art (through the signature). The gestural aspects of the autograph supress its functional ancestry in tooled stamps and seals because the presumption that the artist is an individual *expressing* unique thoughts or visions is tied to an ideology that requires the bourgeois artist to represent unalieneated labour and unrepeatable creativity.

6.3 COURBET AND DUCHAMP

Guichard opens her consideration of signatures with a quote from Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*: '… "It is quite finished," he cried at last, and stooping down he

403 Ibid. p62

wrote his name in long vermillion letters on the left hand corner of the canvas'.[404] In Wilde's novel, the signature of Sir Basil Hallward on the portrait is an apparently final gesture, an action which simultaneously alludes to the completion of the painting and the birth of the work of art, (which, in the case of Dorian Gray, is literally living).[405] Guichard points out that the artist's signature is the only element of the painting which does not change, (in Derridean terms, it is the principle of constant lack and motion made visible). The form of Hallward's fictive signature can be seen to imitate life closely when it is compared to that the 'real' signatures of Gustave Courbet, an artist who experienced fame and notoriety first-hand during his lifetime. Courbet habitually signed his work in what Michael Fried calls 'carnal red, in letters that have an obdurate corporeality of their own: the signature in Courbet's paintings and drawings is never merely a verbal signifier'.[406] Widely recognised, Courbet's signatory practice is a good indicator of the form and function of artists's signatures in the 19th century, and it is, I suggest, the immediate precedent for the 'R. Mutt' signature on *Fountain*.

6.3.1 COMMERCIALISM

As can be seen in what has already been examined in relation to Roman artists signing their work with Greek names, the establishment of *cartellini* as an expedient sign of type

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404 Wilde, O. 'The Portrait of Dorian Gray', *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde,* p390 (London; Hamlyn, 1963)

405 Guichard, op. cit.

406 Fried, M. *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) p108

in 15th century Venice, the counterfeit productions of 16th century 'picture jobbers' and the savy of an 18th century artist like Boucher, one of the functions that signature consistently performs is connected with the performance of art in a market. According to Bertrand Tillier, Courbet's signatory practice shows him to be a commercial pragmatist who sought to establish his name in order to assert a claim to economic and financial freedom.[407] In the mid-19th century, the Paris Salons of the Académie des Beaux-Arts were influential forums for showcasing new artworks. Courbet made a dramatic impact in the Salon of 1850-51 with the display of his realist *Burial at Ornans* (1849-50).[408] Whether or not the painting carried an 'enormous signature in reddish-orange paint' at the time (today, this signature is not visible) is a matter for speculation, but what is certain is that Courbet habitually signed his name prominently on work. His signatory practice has been associated with entrepreneurial nous and the apparent desire to 'advertise'.[409] Patricia Mainardi suggests that conservative elements in 19th century France viewed the 'heroic' commercial independence of Courbet as alarmingly indicative of a capitalism that was eroding aristocratic privileges in French society generally.[410]

Courbet's apparent arrogance and autonomy was affrontery. In 1855, he arranged to exhibit work in a personal 'Pavilion of Realism' opposite the Salon held at the Palais des

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407 Tillier, B. 'Signature du Peinture et sa Caricature: L'exemple de Courbet', *Sociétés et Représentations* 25 (2008) pp79-96

408 Mainardi, P. 'Courbet's Exhibitionism', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 118 (December 1991), pp253-266

409 On the missing signature, see Fried. Loc.cit.

410 Mainardi, op.cit. p254; on Courbet's 'entrepreneurialism', see also Chu, P. t-D, *'The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and Nineteenth Century Media Culture'* (Cambridge, MA: Princeton University Press, 2007)

Beaux-Arts. He emblazoned his name in capitals on the awning above the entrance.[411] Provocatively, the Pavilion included *The Artist's Studio, a real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life* (1854-55), a painting which had been debarred from the exhibition being held opposite. It is interesting to consider the use Courbet made of his name on the awning as a shift of signature from pictorial plane to architectural parergon. Deviating from the standards and controls of the quasi-courtly institution that was the Academy, Courbet used this signature quite literally to institute himself, address new patrons and reach a new (general) public. Courbet deliberately overwrote the institutional (Academic) imprimatur and used his signature to mediate the public perception of his artistic persona.[412] Consequently, when Tillier notes that Courbet's signature featured prominently in numerous cartoons that appeared contemporaneously with his work and observes that the cartoonists who made Courbet their subject routinely exaggerated his signature, (even when they were satirising his most modest paintings), there is a degree to which this can be attributed to reactionary disapproval of the artist's apparent insolence and his political tendencies. Courbet's signature becomes short-hand for an artistic 'personality' who exceeds his *métier*.[413] Satirized, it configures him as a uniformly flashy, egotistical individual engaged in self-promotion: his signature is monumentalised and enlarged in cartoons based on paintings in which his signature is only discretely present.[414] Tillier says that coupled with depictions of inflated signatures,

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411 Mainardi, ibid. p263

412 On the nature of public engagement with musuems and art galleries at this time, see Eagleton, T. *The Function of Criticism: From Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1994)

413 See also Schapiro, M. 'Courbet and popular imagery: An essay on realism and naïveté.' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4, no. 3/4 (1941) pp164-191.

414 Tillier, op.cit. p85

cartoonists undermined Courbet's realism and the political import of his choice of prosaic subject matter: they turned Courbet's signature against him and against his paintings.

One of Tillier's examples is *Une scène de chasse parodie by* Nadar, (the *nom de plume* of Gaspard Félix Tournachon), which was published in *La Gazette de Paris* in 1866. It depicts a group of deer in a painting that are apparently so life-like that a gallery-goer's pet dog is seen to be jumping on its lead in an attempt to chase them: Courbet's signature looms disproportionately large. The signature is used to suggest, apocryphally, the artist's misdirected mimetic ability, and thus it relates to the leitmotifs explored by Kris and Kurz: it is a conceit that opens the cartoon out onto the legend of Parrhasius and Zeuxius). An earlier cartoon, also considered by Tillier, *L'Enterrement d'Ornans par Courbet* by Bertall, (Charles Albert d'Arnoux), directly parodies Courbet's painting *Burial at Ornans* (1849-50). In the cartoon, Bertall's (exaggerated) depiction of Courbet's signature is critical because the imagery it is attached to is deliberately presented as incoherent and ridiculous. Tillier says that Bertall's cartoon suggests that Courbet did not know how to paint but applied his signature 'like a cancer' to any old thing.[415] In Bertall's cartoon, Courbet, who is adjudged not to know how to paint, is described as an artist who is profligate with his signature, a glyph symbolising his arrogance, his deviance and his lack of quality control, (remember, the signature in the cartoon is 'missing' in the painting today). So, in the cartoons, Courbet's signature is used to illustrate a point about the artist's vulgarity and debased aesthetic sense, his bourgeois tendencies and unrefined pursuit of money. To this extent, Courbet's signature

[415] Ibid. p91

permits him to be read in opposition to established ideas used to promote painting as a noble, Fine Art, (i.e. as more than the manufacture of images).

6.3.2 COURBET AS A PRECEDENT FOR DUCHAMP

Courbet, a clever manipulator of his 'media' relationships, was a figure of some fascination for Duchamp: *Étant Donées* (1946-66) suggests a reference to Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde* (1866) and, Jean Clair alleges, to another of Courbet's works, *Woman with White Stockings* (1861); these references recur in etchings Duchamp made in 1968.[416] In an interview with Alain Jouffroy, Duchamp made specific mention of Courbet, a conversational mention that was excised before publication.[417] Hans De Wolf, whose archival research has brought to light this correspondence, speculates that the connections between Courbet and Duchamp are more complex than might be assumed, and if the former's creation of a 'new archetype' for the artist - one which is attention-seeking and anti-intellectual - is profiled as a point of sympathy with the latter, then Realism, problematic relationships with the Academy and the notion of 'pure painting' are also implicated in the Duchampian model.

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416 Duchamp, *Selected Details after Courbet* (1968); see Clair, J. Femalic Moulds, http://www.toutfait.com/issues/volume2/issue_5/news/clair/clair.html#N_2_top, (accessed 27th September, 2012)

417 Wolf, H. de 'Marcel Duchamp, Alain Jouffroy, Gustave Courbet et ces quelques lignes qui dérangent.' *Critique d'Art*, No.25 (Spring 2005), pp115-119

Courbet's 'Pavilion of Realism', his 'Manifesto' and his signatory practice have germane connections to the deployment and form of the signature on Duchamp's *Fountain*. Courbet's unmissable signatures, applied 'carnally' in thick red paint, are a close and necessary connection between the Readymade, the histories of painting and the narratives of artistic virility. His signatory practice makes a necessary contribution to the signature 'R. Mutt' which punctures *Fountain* as a 'spyhole', scoping backwards and forwards, near and far, even as it historically delimits an event and form. Though there are some formal similarities between the vernacular calligraphy of Courbet's signatures and that used to inscribe 'R. Mutt', (the letters applied by Duchamp do not quite conform to the standard French unical form as do Courbet's), it is the equivalent visibilities of Courbet's 'trademark' red signatures and Duchamp's 'R.Mutt' inscription, both in terms of their physical contrast to the objects against which they are posited and in terms of the way they preface those objects, that makes the link necessary. The link becomes more potent when each artist's use of signature against art's superstructural qualities is considered: Courbet's 'Pavilion of Realism', which carried his name so prominently, was provoked by the rejection of his painting *The Artist's Studio* from the official Salon; Duchamp used *Fountain* - arguably a moment of unmitigated realism, (but for the representation of a signature) - to court rejection from the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists (S.I.A.).

6.3.3 THE ARTIST-AT-LARGE

Duchamp's 'R. Mutt' signature was vital in effecting the network of countersignatures and subscriptions that allowed *Fountain* to solicit rejection from the S.I.A. exhibition: in 1917, the signature indicated a satirical 'choice'. Writing in *The Blindman*, using the pseudonym 'Louise Norton', Duchamp challenges 'the meticulous monogamy' of objects and ideas, preferring to locate aesthetics largely and operatively in the polluted human institution:

> Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view - created a new thought for that object.[418]

De Duve's pictorial nominalism, which was discussed in the Introduction, reads the Readymade (especially *Fountain*) as representative of Duchamp's personal abandonment of painting, but also admites the issue of 'choice' at its core. The signature on *Fountain*, then, can be styled as an indication of an artist enacting art through choice. 'Choice' is the method of 'production' which the signature effects and guarantees and the Readymade presents the potential of Art as an absolute heterogenity. As an absolute heterogenity, notwithstanding any engagement with material, art *must* be negotiated by and indicated by choice, the orchestration of context, the enclosure and stabilisation of drifting equivalents as 'property', (material or immaterial).

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[418] Duchamp, M. 'The Richard Mutt Case', *The Blindman No.2 P.B.T* (May 1917) p5

For De Duve, Duchamp is primarily a 'painter'. 'The unopened tube of paint' is the (indsutrial) paradigm for *Fountain* in *Kant After Duchamp* and this, alongwith the historically based analysis of Duchamp's early work in *Pictorial Nominalism*, figures in his conception of the Readymade as Duchamp's abandonment of painting: 'Where impotent talent forces the painter to quit, the genius of impotence takes over!'[419] The metaphorical use of potency is significant. Battersby, for example, understands genius as an attempt to express male virility as the preeminent creative force - thus, the 'genius' of 'impotence' becomes the neurotic representation of lineages that cannot be guaranteed *but* by empirical assertion, (hence the importance of declaiming and signing a name). Derrida's uncompromising reading of Searle's authorship and the '3 + n' model reveals the operation of a such a neurotic (authorial) lineage, a lineage that presents itself as a secure, unassailable name - a patrilineal *fait accompli*. Thus, impotent (neurotic) genius is what is laid functionally bare in the pictorial nominalism of the Readymade. On behalf of the (Duchampian) 'artist-at-large' (i.e. an artist without *métier*), the Readymade signature is seen to make claims to sire indiscriminately; it marks an ambition to claim and be seen to claim, (to be recognised as 'Father'), hence De Duve's view that in post-Kantian aesthetics, 'taste' and 'beauty' are debunked in favour of declarations of status - 'speech acts'.

Blinded by the achievements of Duchamp with the Readymades, (and especially *Fountain*), the tendency in visual art has been to treat the speech act as orientated (purely) towards transforming something that is manifestly not art into 'art', a tendency to which

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[419] De Duve, op.cit. p166

De Duve subscribes. This results in ignoring the place that the speech act has had in the general scheme of art prior to Duchamp and his Readymades, in art that is manifestly 'art'. The speech act is always indicated and obvious in written signatures, thus the signature of Van Gogh on *A Pair of Shoes* (1887), which provides the focus for Derrida in 'Restitutions', marks a speech act in the same way as the appearance of the pseudo-signature on *Fountain* marks a speech act: the substrate and veracity of the latter signature are merely distractions. So, not only does 'R. Mutt' mark a place through which the strong theoretical links between Duchamp and Derrida might be considered, but because of the particularlity of its operation and form as 'speech act', it presents a serious challenge to those who would style *Fountain* a point of origin that ushered in an wholly 'new' evaluative system. The rejection that Duchamp courted from the S.I.A., is linked - via 'R. Mutt' - to Courbet, and so linked to the established French Academy and to the history that the Academy traded on. The signature 'R. Mutt' keys Duchamp into a specific history of official rejection and anti-authoriatarian tactics designed to subvert or circumvent 'academies' and traditions that predates *Fountain*. The germ of the subersive realism of *Fountain* exists in Courbet's practice and declarations - the stupid triumph of the Readymade can be read as the stupid triumph of Courbet's ambition 'to be a man as well', (as he declared in a statement in the catalogue published to accompany the 'Pavilion of Realism').[420]

The 'counterfeit' signature 'R. Mutt', (technically, a pictorial representation of 'a' or 'any' signature), signifies the basic condition that, after this 'prime' signature,

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[420] Courbet, G. 'Statement on Realism' in Harrison, C., P. Wood & J. Gaiger *Art in Theory, 1815 – 1900: an anthology of changing ideas* (Oxford, Blackwell 1998) p372

irrespective of any residual artisanal or material qualities carried through in the appropriation of 'everyday' objects, art *is* a field of absolute heterogeneity constructed and navigated by speech acts, (something De Duve accepts by advancing the idea that the signature is the 'first' of a post-Kantian regime). Here, signature as a mark of possession is the mark of choice over and above the mark of manual production (on objects with 'integrity'). Indeed, the signature enables 'bare-faced' choice to operate as a process of production. One of the key points that De Duve makes in *Kant After Duchamp* is that in the new, evaluative regime apparently ushered in by the Readymade, the artist loses specificity in the sense that artistic skill is no longer tied to particular materials or techniques. A similar point is made by Roberts in *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill & Deskilling in Art after the Readymade*. The extent to which this loss of technical specificity might turn on the ideology of the signature is not something that has been theorized until now. Just as signature has been seen to permit the division of labour in artworks and to facilitate workshop production (as previously discussed in relation to Giotto and Venetian *cartellini*), by the beginning of the 20th century, it permits the dematerialisation and relocation of artistic skill, as demonstrated by Duchamp in *Fountain*.

Thus, if Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* signature is seen to mark the place of artist over object, a place achieved through virtuosity and mimickcry of solid material (specifically, marble), in a double move, the signature 'R. Mutt' on *Fountain* redesignates this place as one in which the production of art moves from specificity (material genre and discipline) to generality ('anything goes' or absolute hetereogenity). At the same time, the artist moves

gradually in the opposite direction - from rule-bound craftsman (who may, nonethless, be an imaginative, 'creative' practitioner) to specific individual or personality (with license to do 'whatever'). 'R. Mutt' is a signature that permits and designates the artist-at-large (an extension of Courbet's 'man-as-well') as a specific individual without specific or necessary skill - the artist is one who can chose. Subsumed into Duchamp's 'personal' signature, with increasing potency and effect, 'R. Mutt' was vital in shaping the character of Conceptualism, and this has significant repercussions through the practices of Relational and Postproduction artists.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 REALIST AND RELATIONAL BAZAARS

The figure of Courbet, then, brings the thesis back to the questions which initially framed it, namely those which concern the place of signature in Relational and Postproduction Art practices that disavow what it apparently stands for in art: individual authorship; completion; integrity; the designation of tradeable objects for private connoisseurs and collectors. Mainardi casts Courbet as an innovator in the art market, someone who obviated the official Parisian Academy and presented a threat to the cultural hegemony by effecting a 'democratic' equivalence between the way that decorative *objets d'art* were sold (and encountered) and the way that the fine art market operated.[421] She explains that conservative critics at the time condemned the debasement of the Salon in terms that reflect the influence the bourgeois market was seen to have on the exhibition:

> Ingres stated repeatedly: "The Salon is no longer anything more than a bazaar, where mediocrity displays itself with impudence". E.J. Delecluze, the leading conservative critic, echoed his sentiments: "The Salons in the Louvre have assumed, more and more each year, the character of a bazaar, where each merchant is obliged to present the most varied and bizarre objects in order to provoke and satisfy the fantasies of his customers."

[421] Mainardi, op.cit. p259. For the suggestion that Courbet represented the kind of relationships of economic dependence involved in 'Institutional Critique' *avant-la-lettre* see Graw, I. *High Price: Art between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, (Köln: Sternberg Press, 2009), pp205-206

> Art historians have largely ignored the significance of these code words: exhibition, market, picture, shop, bazaar (*exhibition, marche, boutique de tableaux, bazar)* pejorative words never used by critics supportive of what we call the avant-garde.[422]

In 19th century France, Courbet represents a descent into vulgarity, and the bazaar isa figuration used to describe the threat he posed. The extract from Mainardi's text is particularly interesting to consider in the light of this one from Bourriaud's *Postproduction*:

> The passage from the eighties to the nineties might be represented by the juxtaposition of two photographs: one of a shop window, another of a flea market or airport shopping mall. From Jeff Koons to Rirkrit Tiravanija, from Haim Steinbach to Jason Rhoades, one formal system has been substituted for another: since the early nineties, the dominant visual model is closer to the open-air market, the bazaar, the souk, a temporary and nomadic gathering of precarious materials and products of various provenances.[423]

Here, the bazaar - the model through which the denigration of the Salon was mediated - is is used to figure the 'flea-market' as Relational Art's liberatory 'temporary autonomous zone'.[424] If there is to be salvation for art overwritten in the 1980s by the visual and object imperatives of an outmoded, highly regulated market which requires physical product to consume, Bourriaud thinks it may be found off-limits in an unregulated and proliferating 'endlessly renewed conglomeration that does not depend on the command of a single author'.[425] The nature of consumption appears to become 'artistic' and global (liberatory) when it involves the appropriation of unbranded or

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422 Ibid. p255

423 Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, op. cit. p22

424 For the origins of the term 'temporary autonomous zone' see: Bey, H. *T.A.Z.* (New York, NY: Autonomedia, 2004)

425 Bourriaud, ibid. p28

counterfeit products of dubious provenances. In the Salon, Courbet's startlingly coloured signature is a sharp, deliberate punctuation and mark of distinction on overcrowded walls. It was seen to reduce paintings to the level of *objets d'art* and bring the general (as opposed to specialist) public into an immediate, superficial relationship with art. It was read as a sign that Courbet had debased Academic conventions in favour of commercial profiteering. In Relational and Postproduction practices, artists can be seen to be engaged in the reverse process, exploiting the unruly bazaar to do what Bourriaud terms 'wrong' shopping. By 'wrong' shopping, an artist like Orozco, (the example used in the Introduction), exercises the power to assign a 'proper' place to perishable and non-perishable materials and practices alike, gathering them together under an appropriate signature for the duration of the artwork (whether that is notionally permanent or not).

When the bazaar is figured as an excepted pirate space, ideally subverting or operating beyond the reach of legislation - a domain of sub-branded knock-offs, counterfeits and shanzhai copies - it is a model which is seen to obviate, interrupt or negate signature, ('distinctive branding', 'individual authorship'). Distinctive branding and individual authorship are seen to be cohesive and entire, to represent those Academic,'White Cube', mainstream commercial or material attributes which are lost or abandoned in general *melée* of the bazaar, a place where goods are interchangeable, unpretentious and often overtly counterfeit (illegaly signed). The paradox, which Bourriaud does not approach, concerns the establishment of individual authorship by artists in this context.

Fleshing out his description of the flea-market he says:

> Here, past production is re-cycled and switches direction. In an involuntary homage to Marcel Duchamp, an object is given a new idea. An object once used in conformance with the concept for which it was produced now finds new potential uses in the stalls of the flea market.[426]

He could be (in fact he is) describing the operation of signature as it relates to the reassignment and resurrection of past-production, of the salvage operation (counter)signature performs. He uses unsigned examples drawn from 'involuntary', everyday life as ideological illustrations that appear to permit him to discuss the flea-market in terms that avoid dealing with signatory operations. Signed objects are no more complete or conclusive in their object-forms anymore than unsigned ones: they may be re-assigned with similar ease. The reference to Duchamp in Bourriaud's passage is not surprising: he uses the *inframince* to figure his Relational 'interstice', and it is the *inframince* that he appears to be using to describe the impact of a 'new idea' on an object. Of course 'newness' is a quality Reniassance signatures have been seen to impute into artworks. I have suggested that Derrida's *différance* - a concept which is essential to the operation of signature - might be considered equivalent to Duchamp's *inframince*. Re-reading Bourriaud's statement with this in mind, is it possible to see flea-market objects participating in a process of countersignature? Does the 'newness' of the idea not require that it is *recognised* as new (and how does that work)? What does the quality of 'newness' bring to the object if not an attempt at authorship? The fact that Relational Artists work with unbranded goods and 're-mix' culture is accepted as proof that they interfere with 'traditional' authorship. In fact, what they do is gather aspects of cultural and commercial production to themselves and assert signature (the test for which is lower

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426 Ibid. p23

than authorship) as a colonizing force. As Derrida's 'Sarl' formulation makes clear, signature is a corporate action. If the Realist bazaar is a model of descent into vulgarity, the Relational bazaar is a model of discrimination and elevation from it. As a means of communication and a mode of production, signature allows for both.

7.2 PROVENANCE AND PRODUCTION

Bourriaud marks up 'multiple provenances' in his passage on the 'bazaar', and his use of the word in its plural form indicates objects with disparate and unclear origins, rather than legitimate attribution. He uses 'provenances' to allude to the global nature of manufacture, the excesses and obsolescences that result from industrialized capitalism and the impossibility of tracing verifiable sources in counterfeit or unmarked goods. In the Realist bazaar, Courbet was an artist seeking to establish his name by appealing to an everyman public. Relational and Postproduction artists - so much more conventional - are those whose market-finds are carefully regulated by signature. If Courbet declared his signature speculatively in the open market to a general public; Orozco aligns his with the Salons in which his work (eventually) manifests, riddling materials and stories from the Bourriaudian bazaar with a self-reflexive provenance, hiding his signature for a court of initiates (connoisseurs). Signature is what produces his visibility and recognition of his mastery of 'newness'or 'realignment'. In the tradition realised and propagated by Duchamp, (alluding by way of 'R. Mutt' to Courbet), the Relational Artist might be determined as an 'artist-at-large' - 'a man as well' - one whose practice is free of

specificity in terms of material or technique. Bourriaud makes it clear in Postproduction that he sees post-Duchampian consumption-as-production as appropriative, enunciative and inventive - 'immaterial'.[427]

When the artist-at-large is an ensemble of functions and signature is a point of accumulation, methods of artistic production do not necessarily involve the manufacture or use of physical objects, legitimate materials or genres. The method of artistic production can be described as spectral. Several of Derrida's chosen metaphors enhance understanding of how spectral production works, but one of the most apt for Relational Art alludes to the etymology of 'salvage' (as payment for saving or retrieving shipwrecked property) to describe the operation of the *revenant*.[428] The idea of salvage is one way of understanding the operational relationship Derrida construes between signature and countersignature because it can be related to the way legitimation may be mobilized to establish provenance - chains of attribution and ownership - as property. In 'Restitutions', Derrida makes clear the principal movement in signature is proprietorial: 'let us posit an axiom that the desire for attribution is a desire for appropriation. In matters of art as it is everywhere else'.[429]

Like genius, 'provenance' relates etymologically to place of origin. In contemporary everyday use, provenance gives onto the notion of the 'A.O.C.', mentioned previously in connection with *cartellini* as superscripted, geographic designators. Provenance is a

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427 Ibid. pp18-19

428 'This word shipwreck: before here connoting the abyss, the ghost, or the return of some feared catastrophe…' Derrida, *The Paper Machine*, op. cit. p9

429 Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, op. cit. p260

descriptor which has particular application in the production of 'slow' food and 'artisanal' manufacture, (and it is surely not a coincidence that one of Bourriaud's pre-eminent Relational Artists, Rikrit Tiravanija is celebrated for cooking and serving meals as art practice). Provenance has a long history of specific application in art, establishing chains of connection between artworks and to the authentic, singular point of origin that is the artist through bills of sale, transfer of ownership, exhibition and mediation.[430] Provenance documents the chronological passage of artworks as property travelling through ownership, ideally tracing the moment of departure to the hand of a specified individual. Often, the signature of an artist on a work of art raises the presumption of authenticity so bluntly that in practice signatures without (additional) provenance are rarely accepted at face value. A signature on a work of art is insufficient: there is work to be done in verification - importantly, provenance shows how 'owning' can be construed as 'producing'.

Relational Art and Postproduction artists are concerned with artistic provenance because they are concerned with the re-assignment of 'proper' place - of locus - to cultural practices and pre-existent products 'out-there', in standardised, everyday life. This is diametrically opposed to the commercial levelling between things that was feared by the 19th century French Academy. Signature performs a significant function in relation to the assignment of place - indeed this is a primary function. In Derrida's post-9/11 interview with Borradori, it is clear that the determination of place was very much an aspect of the signatory process for him. Understanding and emphasizing signature's role as a mapping

[430] The emphasis on 'provenance' rather than aesthetic judgment in the process of attribution is something that increases in the 20th century, See Jones, op. cit. p162

device addresses some of the misunderstandings brought about by concentrating on the humanist enigma of its paraph or its semiotic appearance.

The cartographic function of signature has been revealed by interrogating narratives and examples outwith the confines of era-dependent historical specialism. The intimate relationship between artwork and place (rather than object) is thus established at a conceptual level. The relevance of movement and travel to art, in terms of the mobility of people and the portability of things, is long-established and is suggests a deeply rooted precondition for speculative production and market exchange. Boltanski & Chiapello draw attention to the ideological importance of mobility to capital in the Projective City, which allows the dematerialisation and reconstitution of wealth as 'pockets of accumulation' through encounters and events, (signatures, which carry the power of abbreivation, manifest productive associations and networks). Signature makes art mobile and signifies its historical tendency to dematerialise - artworks and artists become landmarks with no necessary attachment to place; marbled frames replace material as a source of value. Since the Early Reniassance, artists have gradually become more important than objects in art and this anticipates the imperative of Third Spirit Capitalism to rid itself of obstacles.

The gradual ingressions of signatory practice into Medieval illuminations and marginalia accompanied the 'decluttering' of textual space in favour of legibility and interrupt the unity of the visible Word, which could no longer be treated as representative of an autocratic entity. The marginal location of signatures and self-inscriptions permitted a

degree of freedom and play resulting in *ornament*. The self-conscious subject can be seen to emerge through social affiliation rather than simple, conclusive individuation. Signature challenges entireity and self-sufficiency at a conceptual level. Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* signature likewise occasions the displacement of material, asserting the value of skill. Displacements of material can be read as an interruption of presence, of voice (as theorised in Plato's Pharmacy), and it is accompanied by the non-fungibility of artefacts. When the voice is whole and omnipotent, the varied particularities of its manifestations do no matter. Conversely, when the skill of the artist moves into the space vacated by material, the artefact is seen to acquire singularity as an artwork - the power of speech appears to devolve to the individual. Signature is a *dynamis*, a process of production and simultaneously, *a replacement for material*. When Derrida talks of the signature of 'September 11' and De Lillo writes of the 'most photographed barn in America', they allude to the construction of place through familiarity and repetition, through countersignature. Physical location is rapidly of secondary significance. Thus, when method of production in Relational and Postproduction art is recognised as the assignment of *proper* place, the importance of signatory processes in these practices may be revealed. Relational and Postproduction Art represent the ideological reservation and realignment of product (material or cultural) in service of a *specific* artist (or 'curator'), whose signature is a colonial and industrial force.

7.3 SIGNATURE, COMMODITY AND MARKET

Signature has a close relationship with the form and location of the commodity in art, which, like signature itself, is always split, deferred and differed elsewhere – dematerialised - incapable of being embodied entirely within any artwork. In art, the signature and the commodity are, in Derridean terms, both spectral and both have a temporally complex relationship to the market, which has a place to play in establishing them both to some extent. Velthius has produced a useful and relevant analysis of the operations of the contemporary art market based on interviews and data collected in New York and Amsterdam in the early part of the 21st century, (largely from dealers and gallerists).[431] Velthius states that in this market, straightforward capitalist logic is rejected. It appears to 'endorse the more profound goals of the aesthetic and the artistic', and mystique is attached to the commercial strategies of galleries through the interplay of of arcane role-play, the affirmation and destablisation of social status, and 'horse-trading' which involves artists, dealers, collectors, and the nominal public or art audience.[432] Primary art markets, i.e. those to which 'new' artwork is released are those especially marked in the complex interdependency of personalities, events, and institutions which, Velthius points out, can take on almost familial cast.

His characterisation of the art market shares features with the operations Duchamp put into play when he enacted the *Fountain*, and it has a demonstrable sympathy with the

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431 Velthius, O. *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market of Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2005) See also, Graw, I. *High Price: Between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009)

432 Ibid. p17

mode of networked organisation in the Projective City - he believes not that the art world is becoming more commercial, 'but that the economy is becoming more cultural'.[433] The way it becomes more cultural involves signature: 'In unmasking the equivalence between art and economy, the signature plays an important role.'[434] Velthius considers Duchamp's financial works - *Tzanck Check* (1919) (Fig. 9), a hand-made, facsimile cheque made out to Dr Tzanck, Duchamp's dentist in New York; *Monte Carlo Bonds* (1924), which were intended to finance a scheme to play roulette; *Czech Check* (1965), a psuedo-cheque made out for John Cage to auction and *Cheque Bruno* (1965), which was produced on paper clippings in response to a request from Philippe Bruno - to represent early examples of 'imaginary economics' at work.[435] Signature in Duchamp's work is seen to have the capacity to import Readymades from the anonymity of their industrial manufacture to the subjective world of art, and to 'export' the subjective world of the 'craftsmanly artwork to an anonymous, monetary economy' via works like the *Tzanck Check*.[436] Velthius says that Duchamp's signature 'breaks the seal of value'.[437] The hermeticism of any seal - even that apparently fixed numerically on the face of currency - is questioned by Derrida: he assumes the constant flux between inflation and deflation. [438] 'Value', like 'presence', is always already here and there, found and retrieved in an unstable overlap or *dynamis*. That is what signature can be seen to mediate and

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433 Velthius, *Imaginary Economics*, op. cit. p14

434 Ibid. p47

435 Ibid. p42-43

436 Ibid. p41-42

437 Ibid. p47

438 For a recent examination of Derrida's metaphors of credit/debt see Butler, J. 'On Cruelty', *London Review of Books* Vol. 36 No. 14, (17 July 2014), pp31-33

rationalize in art. Duchamp emerges as an artist who anticipates and reflects upon 'imaginary economics' because he is actuely aware of signature as a complex process.

Velthius states that the 'objectifying' effect that market transactions have on artworks are 'deobjectified' by the artworld's (dealers) propensity to nurture long-term social relationships (with artists, collectors, critics, curators, museums etc) through dinners, gifts and informal 'lifestyle' exchanges. Such 'relational' practices in this iteration of the artworld: 'are so endemic on the art market that the distinction between a non-market logic which equals sociability and a market logic which equals anonymous exchange is ultimately a false one'.[439] Velthius is of the opinion that the art market can never be one in which *anonymous consumption* can play a part, and this goes to the heart of why issues of signature are so important, especially if we accept that the post-Duchampian artist is an artist who exercises choice (De Duve) or enacts consumption (Bourriaud). In art historical narratives, the notion of anonymous consumption is linked to the individuation of art production at the level of the connoisseur (who has a productive, aesthetic role) - 'signed' artworks are speculatively produced outside of courtly commission. Long-range historical precedents for this - rites of purification and deobjectification (ridding the object of its commerical taint) - may be found in the decline in the incidence of *cartellini* as visible signatures indicative of origin in late 16th century Venetian works in favour of *sprezzatura*, something which is much more dissolute in conveying 'origin' and requires individuated, expert appreciation rather than anonymous, uninformed purchase. In Velthius's analysis, sociability elevates participation in the market beyond the level of

439 Ibid. p75

bald commerical exchange as courtly connoissuership elevates appreciation of art beyond that which is literally inscribed. In the contemporary art market, commodities can be seen to be socially reserved and this social reservation is an aspect of their capital production.

Velthius alludes to the role of genius in the social construction of aesthetic and economic value in his discussion of the 'pricing scripts' which govern contemporary art markets. Pricing scripts are informal conventions - 'the most subjective thing that happens in the gallery' - which help gallerists/dealers 'find' the right price for an artwork according to certain variables, (previous prices, museum shows, reviews etc), in the artist's biography/cv:

> A brief excursion through the economic history of the art market teaches us that pricing scripts are stable in the short run. In the long run they evolve under large-scale social and cultural processes such as the emancipation of the artist in the Renaissance, the rise of the notion of genius and innovative urges…[440]

Variables in the artworks materiality, (its dimensions, medium and/or technique), are not as important as an artist's biography. In the Projective City, this much might be guessed. Noticeably, Velthius also links the evolution of pricing scripts to the 'cult of the creative individual' in the 19th century and the emphasis on the careers of artists rather than on individual works/canvases. I have argued in that Courbet, a 'creative individual' who attempted to use his signature to break the co-ordinated action of the Academy, is an end-marker in the movement of intrinsic value away from 'works' to 'artists', (as Van Eyck is a marker in the movement of intrinsic value away from 'material' to 'skill'). He

[440] Ibid. p119

represents the imminent emergence of the 'artist-at-large', a function anticipated in older historical precedents. The displacement of material and relocation of value in artists's skills during the Early Renaissance, coupled with the significance of the implications of Van Eyck's decision to employ a verb connotating 'presence' rather than 'production' in the *Arnolfini* inscription, very gradually give onto the establishment of the 'artist-at-large', an individual empowered by virtue of individuation rather than skill.

7.4 LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR AUTHORSHIP

Signature's relationship is in the first instance to place and provenance, then to commodity. The perception of provenance varies across history: in Byzantine icons, provenance may be seen to reside in the object and its materials; in Reniassance panel paintings, the provenance of the artist (established by skill) gradually becomes more important; in post-Duchampian and Relational Art, the quality of connections an artist makes by orchestrating projects is of primary significance (and this reiterates what Boltanski & Chiapello say). Provenance is also represents how ownership is mobilized as a value-adding process. The signature on *Fountain* anticipates and represents the manner in which artistic skills or competences can be seen to change over the course of the 20th century. When the artist can be prized as a specific individual (without any necessary skill) the signature is fetished as an autograph that can be applied to anything without any other necessary qualification. According to Roberts, the Duchampian artist-at-large precedes the:

> …reinvention of the artists as creative entrepreneur (under the increased glare of celebrity culture). This produces an intense conflict of ideologies: the artist's identity may be deconstructed under the impact of the social relations of advanced art but it is simultaneously reconstructed as an enchanted image under the reified forms of the mass media. The idea of the artist as an ensemble of functions, becomes a set of multitasking career opportuntities.[441]

When the artist is 'an ensemble of functions', as a lowest common denominator without attachment to an idiom, signature becomes the means of rationalizing everything useful as an individual point of accumulation and is a useful vehicle for carrying forward deeply sedimented ideas about singular talent and creative expression.

Boris Groys has written that the 21st century is an era of mass art production (rather than mass art consumption) which is facilitated by the wide and increasing accessibility of digital image-making and distributing technology.[442] In this era, contemporary art is a 'mass cultural practice' and all images are equivalent. Equally indiscriminate and profligate, as a mark of potential 'authorship' at the level of a lowest common denominator, signature is in step with the prevalent conditions of cultural *production*. Signature does not sort documents, works and ephemera into discrete categories as does the author-function. In fact, it works as a pollutant: there is nothing which signature touches that can be wholly reserved. As lowest common denominator authorship, signature points to corporate (rather than bodily) traits and the necessarily corporate author is described by Derrida's 'Sarl' formula, (3 + n). The consequences of figuring

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441 Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, op. cit. p11

442 Groys. B. 'Art and Money' *e-flux journal* #24, April 2011, (accessed 15th July 2014)

signature as the lowest common denominator in authorship means that the production of art has no *necessary* connection to the narratives of creative individuation that stem from the Renaissance, (because art has never had a necessary connection to creative individuation). The visibility of images (and artists) is produced through affirmation and repetition. The character of that repetition (as unique and the same) is best described as a signatory process, and the difference between Renaissance and Byzantine art is best read as a relocation of the signatory process, rather than merely a technical separation of 'copybook' images from 'originals'. The indiscriminate profligacy of signature and the range of potential equivalences it can make allows the kinds of visibility it constructs to be dissolved, blurred and complicated.

Repeatedly in the work of art historians, signtaure is described as problematic. It is seen to be a frustration when it attracts too much attention (as can be seen in treatments of the signature of Gislebertus at Autun, and the signature of Van Eyck on the *Arnolfini Portrait*), and it is seen to be a frustration when it stands in the way of an overarching theory, in the methodology of Beazley, for example. It permits contesting narratives to be constructed, as the dispute between Heidegger and Schapiro over the remains of Van Gogh demonstrates, and it allows claims to ownership and legitimacy to be made without approval: signature necessarily draws disparate parties together in ongoing acts of dissolution in spite of attempts to prevent that, (Searle's attempts to control Austin's legacy addes to the proliferation of illegitmates). Derrida's revelatory understanding of 'countersignature' describes the necessarily unstable structure of signature, and gives on to considerations of signature's peculiar temporality. Signature's temporality works to

present the past in an effectively truncated form as a promise to present (again) in future. Furthermore, in the operation of signature, it is clear to see past and future become commuted (in the fleeting, impossible moment of the present) to that which is 'elsewhere'. Signature permits equivalence between different forms of corporeality and capital, mediating the passage between material and immaterial.

7.5 METHODOLOGY REVIEWED

My historical analysis of signature spans several centuries - using examples from the 6th century BC to the early 20th century. The value of this analysis lies in its ability to characterise of signature as a variable, culturally and historically determined process. As a subject for study in art history, signature is most often treated as a point of interest within a specific period, (most often the Renaissance); or within the practice of a specific artist. Inevitably, these analyses are iconographic, departing from the appearance of signatures within a pre-determined field of study. While these studies are extremely important - and this thesis would have been impossible without them - their necessarily narrow focus tends to underscore naturalized assumptions and commonsense understandings about what and why signatures 'do' and 'are'. Thus, in studies of Renaissance artists, there is a demonstrable tendency to accept that signature is (only or primarily) a mark of creative pride or invention. As a result, signatory practice is seen to start then, as a mark of individuation. Indications of creative pride and invention are seen to individuate the artist as something a more than an artisan. Marking invention and

personal satisfaction cannot be extracted from the general function of signature to guarantee and verify. Tracing the history of signature through a broader range of examples illustrates this, and provides a way to challenge naturalized assumptions - signature is not merely or always a mark of individuation as has been generally understood. Studies of the appearances of written signatures are significant indicators of how and where the division essential to the signatory process is excised, and illustrate its historical contingency, but they privilege signature as an appearance - a sign - rather than an operation. In itself, the exercise of tracing signature across defined art historical eras provides a foundation for rethinking historical narratives which use the idea of the expressive signature to constitute grounds for making distinctions between artists and artisans *per se*, and thereby provides the opportunity to review the nature of the distinction.

Where signature has been treated broadly, as it was in the early days of semiotic studies, it has been divorced from its variable, historical context in order to be treated 'scientifically', (iconographically), according to its appearance. This is an approach that is limited in its utility because it is idiomatic and it divorces signature from meaningful relationships with general social practice. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of signature in art lies in its heterogenity; its necessary appeals to the circumstances in which names are written and applied in situations 'outside' the art object or image. This is the basis on which the relationship between art and the economy is mediated. Consistently in his work on signature, Derrida emphasizes its ability to pollute idioms (whether they are philosophical, literary, aesthetic). At a superstructural level, the general

function of signature to communicate presence in the absence of the signatory does not change, but the operation of this function reveals the necessary unstable, impure condition of texts (and 'things'). Signature is a device that presents itself as singular, yet *must* operate through (impossible) repetitions of itself.

Reviewing and comparing historical exemplars across a timespan which can be measured in millenia rather than decades, allows the operative split upon which signature relies to be clearly configured, regardless of its historical forms and denials. It is an operation which requires distance to be understood as a function, the subtle commonalties of its functions across history are something that narrow chronologies tend to misunderstand. Armed with a functional understanding of signature, the instrumentalism of signature's historical forms, which reflect the extent to which it denies or affirms its distance from 'truth', can be better addressed. The significance of signature can be reimagined and new perspectives on how and why it works can be generated. Duchamp's representation of a signature on *Fountain* establishes grounds for considering both Courbet's realism and the sympotic *Aristonothos Krater* necessary precedents for the Readymade. It is an instructive coincidence that the signatures on *Fountain* and the *Aristonothos Krater* are both satirical, pseudonymous and found on functional ceramic objects. The coincidence has enough points of contact that it can be considered a 'heuristic parallel' so the Salon-style exhibition from which *Fountain* was rejected can be considered equivalent to a Sympoisum, a drinking vessel is made equivalent with a urinal, and the role of satire (rather than taste) in mediating experience on an aesthetic level is brought to the fore. In this heuristic parallel, 'R. Mutt' represents the signature not as a point of origin, rather as

an instance in a long history of aesthetically constructed satire, as important a basis for understanding the Readymades as the abandonment of painting, or their subsequent influence on Conceptualism.

What Derrida's work on signature and countersignature makes explicit is the essential infelicity, division or *différance* in signature, a split which makes every signature 'counterfeit'. In Derrida's etymology, the word counterfeit is understood in terms of its components: 'counter-' gives us 'against' and 'beside; '-feit' gives us 'truth', so the fracture which signature relies upon in order to function is against and beside truth. Signature always operates in the manner of a counterfeit or fraud and in this respect it is not surprising to discover the satirical quality of the 'first' signatures which both the *Aristonothos Krater* and *Fountain* purport. To recall a statement which was quoted in the Introduction, Bourriaud says the Relational Artist 'dwells in the circumstances the present offers him so as to turn the setting of his life, (his links with the physical and conceptual world), into a lasting world.'[443] Mention of the 'present' is telling. When Derrida describes the written signature as claiming general *maintenance*, he describes the unusual temporality that the signature trades on in order to function: in the temporality of the signature, the 'present' is deferred, elsewhere, equally a past-present and a future-present but never solely the impossible, constantly receding present-present. If the personal setting of life is to become 'lasting', i.e. a general *maintenance* rather than lived or living, how can that state be produced and mobilized?

[443] Bourriaud, *Relational Art*, op. cit. pp13-14

APPENDIX

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1. Marcel Duchamp *Fountain* (1917) [online image] Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-fountain-t07573 (accessed 21st January 2015)

Fig. 2 Jan Van Eyck *Arnolfini Portrait*, (1434) [online image] Available from: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Eyck_-_Arnolfini_Portrait.jpg (accessed 21st January 2015)

Fig. 3 Michelangelo, *Pietà* (1498-99) [online image] Available at: *http://thearkofgrace.com/2013/10/26/pieta-1498-1499/* (accessed 21st January 2015)

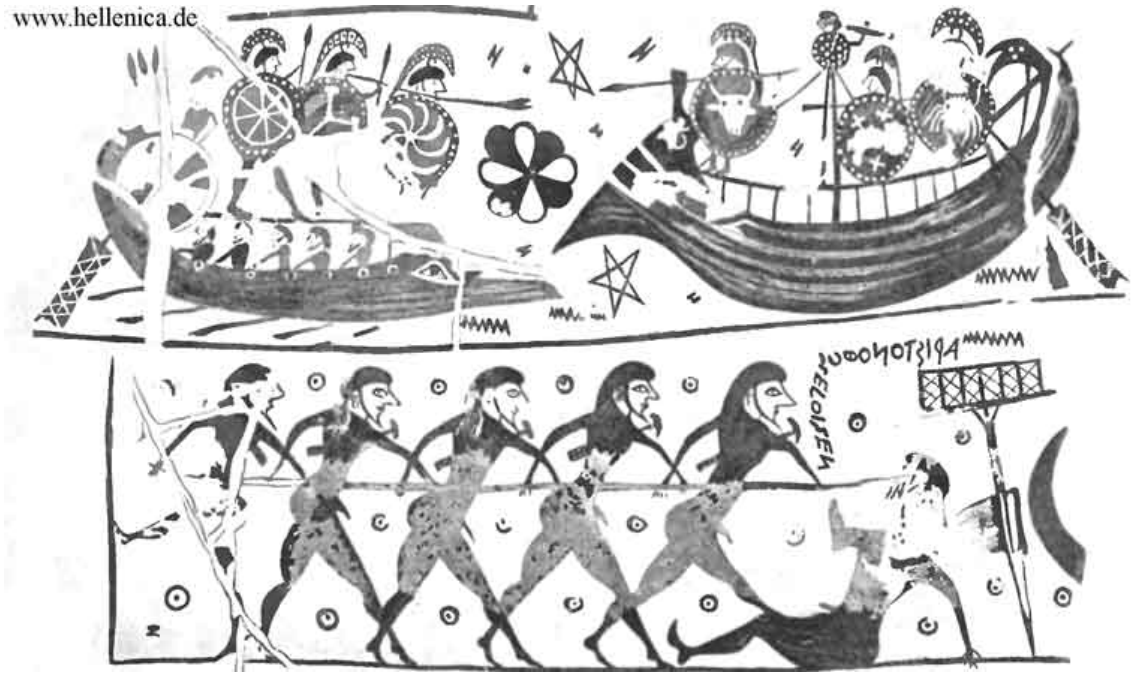

Fig. 4 Detail from the *Aristonothos Krater*, (c. 650 BC) [online image] Available from: http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/AristonothosKrater.html (accessed 21st January 2015)

Fig. 5 'Signature' of Gislebertus, *The Last Judgment*, Cathedral of St-Lazare, Autun, (c.1120) [online image] Available from: http://www.paradoxplace.com/Photo%20Pages/France/Burgundy%20Champagne/Autun/Autun_Portal.htm (accessed 21st January 2015)

Fig. 6 Lando di Pietro, *Crucifixion* (1338) [online image] Available at: http://www.viaesiena.it/en/mendicanti/itinerario_o/basilica-dell-osservanza/il-convento-osservanza/museo-dellosservanza/Crocifisso-di-Lando-di-Pietro (accessed, 21st January 2015)

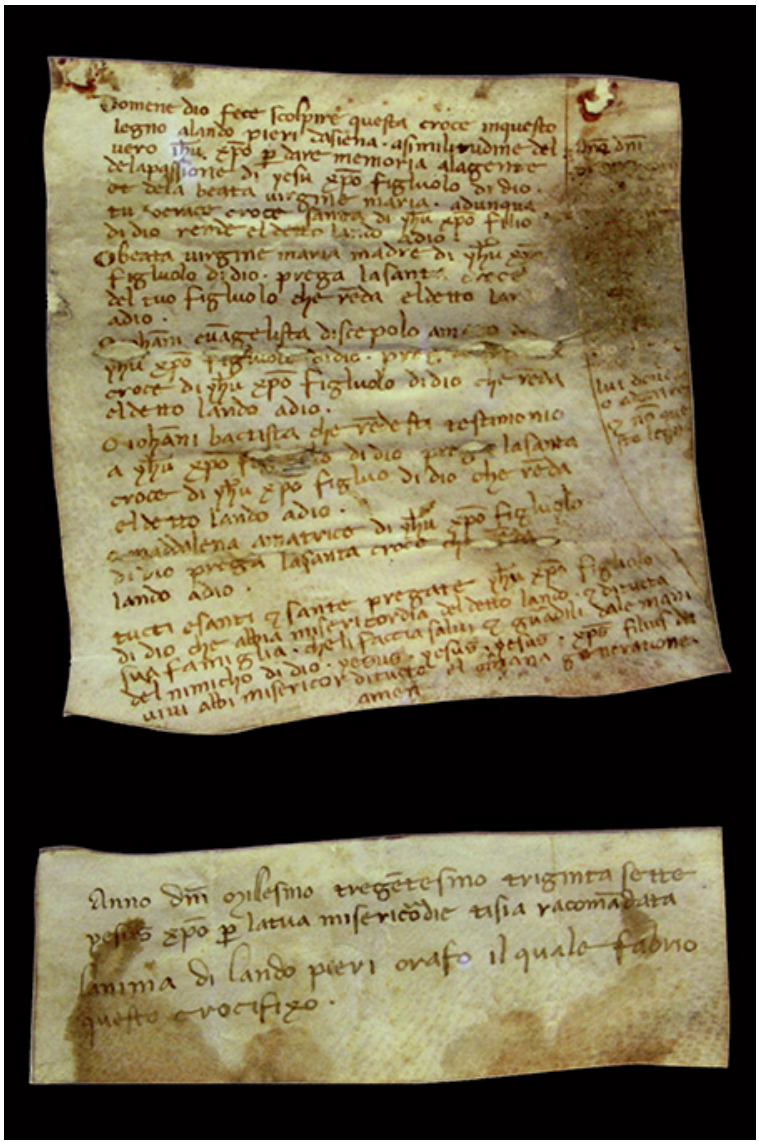

Fig. 7 Detail of inscriptions from Lando's *Crucifixion*, [online image] Available at: http://www.stilearte.it/in-quel-crocifisso-ce-un-manoscritto-nascosto/ (accessed 21st January 2015)

Fig. 8 Fra Filippo Lippi, *Madonna with Child Enthroned (Tarquinia Madonna)* (1447) [online image] Available from: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lippi_Madonna_Tarquinia.jpg (accessed 21st January 2015)

Fig. 9 Gustave Courbet *Self-Portrait (The Desperate Man)* (1443-45) [online image] Available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Courbet#mediaviewer/File:Gustave_Courbet_-_Le_D%C3%A9sesp%C3%A9r%C3%A9.JPG (accessed 21st January 2015)

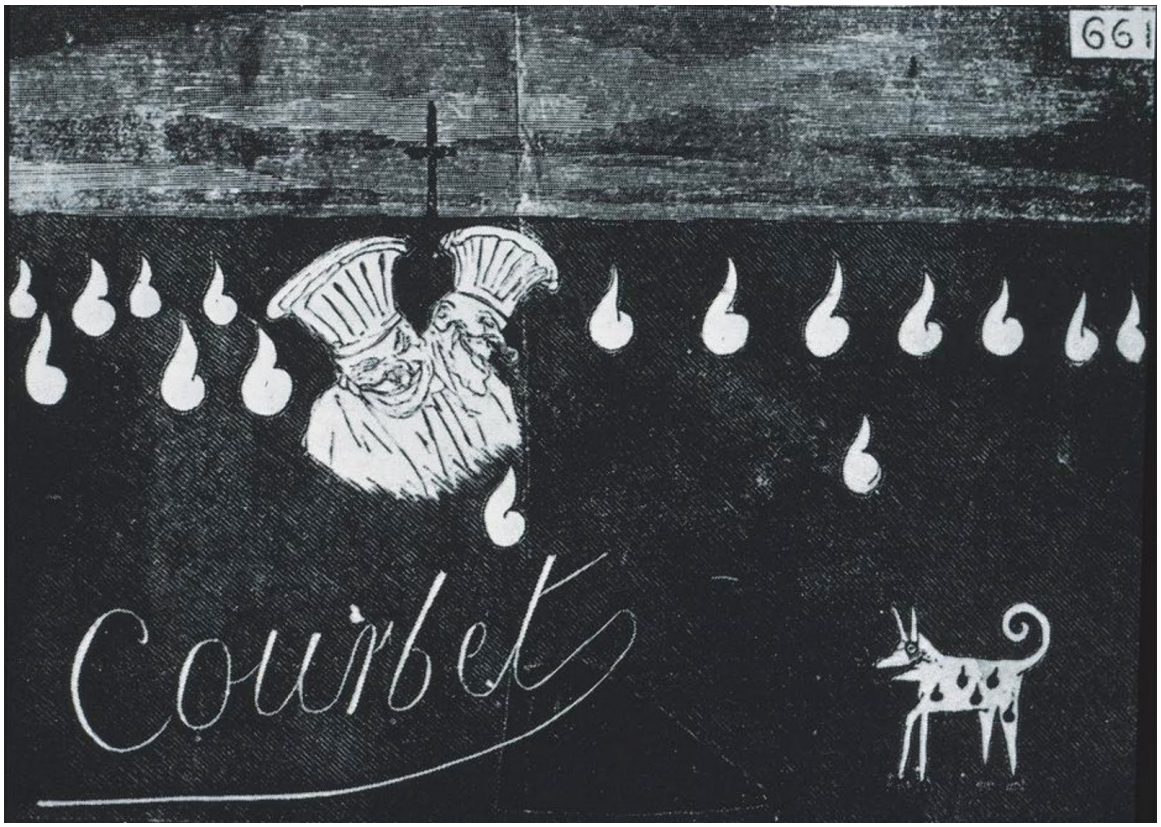

Fig. 10 Albert d'Arnoux, C. ('Bertall') *L'Enterrement à Ornans, par Courbet, maître peintre*, Le Journal pour rire, 7th March 1851 [online image] Available from: https://cecile1968.wordpress.com/2010/04/ (accessed 21st January 2015)

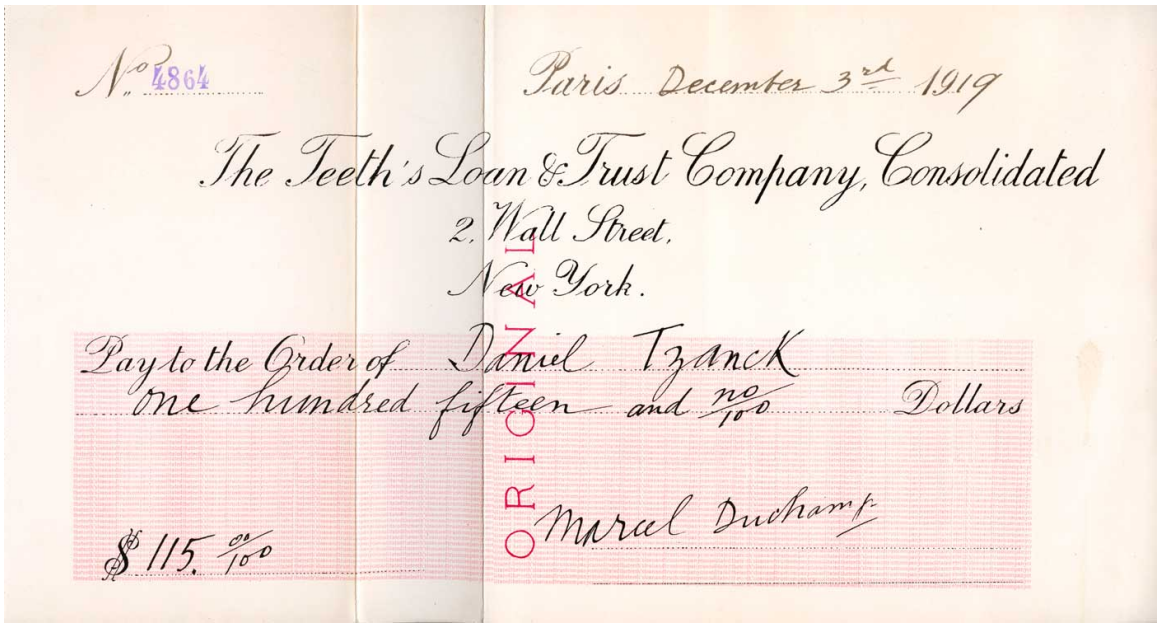

Fig. 11 Marcel Duchamp *Tzanck Cheque* (1919) [online image] Available at: http://www.toutfait.com/unmaking_the_museum/Tzanck%20Check.html (accessed 21st January 2015)

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